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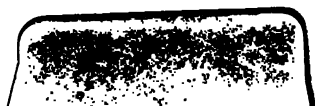
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THE
YOUNG DOCTOR.

A Novel

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“LADY GRANARD’S NIECES,” “SIR ARTHUR
BOUVERIE,” &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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THE YOUNG DOCTOR.

CHAPTER I.

SIDNEY BECKFORD made several visits to Chillingworth Park after his first introductory one to the Dowager Marchioness, who, as Mrs. Summers afterwards informed him, was then staying with her son, the Marquis, for two or three months, as it was her custom to do every year. These visits were not pleasant ones to Sidney ; and he would gladly have dispensed with the honour of attending her ladyship ; because, notwithstanding she displayed a gra-

cious benignity of manner towards him, there was a stately and studious condescension about it, which he particularly disliked. Nevertheless, as it is not especially necessary that physicians should entirely approve of their patients' behaviour towards themselves, Sidney Beckford continued to attend her ladyship for the injury, which she persisted in saying her hand had sustained, and for a nervous disorder, the symptoms of which, as described by the Dowager, were perfectly at variance with all his preconceived ideas of such a case.

Apparently, however, though Sidney did not much like the manners of the only person in Chillingworth House, with whom he was on speaking terms, he decidedly approved of the Park and grounds attached to it ; for, whenever he found some leisure moments on his hands, as steadily as he progressed through the every day business of his life, so steadily did he bend his steps towards the Chillingworth estate, and ramble through its woods and mea-

dows, with the eagerness of a child—save that the earnestness with which he traversed them appeared untinged by a thought of delight—for an evident look of pain was at times visible upon his features when he did so. He sought, perhaps, the unbroken solitude of their scenery as a means to divert his mind from painful themes of thought ; but when our thoughts and feelings are embittered by some strong grief, it is but idle to expect relief in solitude, and Sidney felt this. How can solitude quiet pain ? In its hush, the pangs and thoughts of misery throb more distinctly into life ; and it seems as if silence lent to each a thousand tongues, so that they may speak in sharper accents than they ever spoke before.

Yet Sidney was not a sentimentalist ; he was not one of those who wishing to appear feeling, feign what they wish to feel, and at last believe that they are what they seem ; Sidney was no idle mourner, though he grieved deeply over the misery of past

years, over the misery of the present. If he gave way, when by himself, to the bitter feelings and fancies his memory and heart brought vividly to his mind, he never for any length of time indulged in them, and always strove in the end to surmount the strong sense of his own unhappiness which they awakened there. Society never saw Sidney otherwise than cheerful, and had any one taken his most intimate friends' opinion of him, they would instantly have heard him pronounced one of the best tempered, happiest of men in existence, though perhaps in a charitable whisper one of them might have inferred, that "It was wonderful he should be so, considering how much he must feel his personal deformity, unless, indeed, he happened to be happily and wonderfully blind to it,—some people are to their defects."

Mrs. Summers liked Sidney excessively ; she saw he was indefatigable in his profession, and that he listened to her conversation on whatever subject it was, with

imperturbable politeness ; she noticed he paid more attention to her than young men usually do to elderly females, who have neither pretty nor wealthy daughters to make their kindness a matter of policy for their own interests, and as the end of the six weeks, which was the limited period of Sidney's stay at D——, drew nigh, she began to feel very sorry at the idea of soon losing so agreeable a companion.

So matters went on peaceably enough at D—— ; but not thus quietly did they progress with several members of the great family at the Park, with whom it is now necessary that the reader should become better acquainted, as some fragments of Sidney's life, yet unrelated, are inextricably mixed up with theirs.

All was not well at Chillingworth House ; life did not advance there in the peaceful regularity it should have done. The Marquis of Chillingworth was a rigid disciplinarian, and if he possessed any feeling, it was so carefully preserved from outward manifestation, by his cold and haughty

demeanour, that people came readily to the conclusion of his having none at all. The Marchioness had been a celebrated beauty, thought herself one still, though the ripened charms of her daughter, the beautiful Lady Florence, might have warned her to withdraw her pretensions on that point, before they became ridiculous. She was not, however, without good, natural feeling at times; she thought justly now and then, and would have generally acted in consonance with sound reason had not some vain whim or thwarted caprice prevented her doing so. She was not less than eight-and-forty-years of age, but the remains of the great beauty she once possessed made her look younger than she really was. With these traces of her former loveliness, which she cherished with peculiar care, she endeavoured, by judiciously exhibiting them, to retain the sceptre she had so long held in her own hand, and was therefore jealous of her beautiful daughter, who unconsciously, as she advanced towards womanhood, won it from

her grasp. To her she was strictly severe ; to her son, the handsome Lord Ravenshill, indulgently weak.

Under the alternately stern or capricious wills of parents like these it could scarcely have been expected that any children would improve either in mind or temper ; and Lord Ravenshill and his sister did not. The labour of years of judicious training on the part of the instructors provided for them both, was counteracted in a great measure by the conduct of the Marquis and Marchioness, in whom neither the brother or the sister confided, or looked up to for advice. Left to themselves then, the Lady Florence, though possessing many good principles, and honourable feelings in the main, grew up passionate and self-willed. Lord Ravenshill, little noticed by his father, but utterly idolized by his mother, who by her foolish indulgences fostered his idle whims into actual vices, passed through his college and London life with just as much dissipation, as he could conveniently put up with. But of Lord Ravenshill it is difficult to speak ; his was


no easy character to decipher, readily irritated and readily appeased, he seemed to be one of those uncertain men upon whose stability of temper no dependence can be placed ; for he was just as likely to contradict the hopes as well as the fears of his friends. Lavishly generous, idly satirical, selfish through habit, yet kind-hearted in the main, at times exerting the most perfect command of temper, at others giving way to the most injudicious anger, he was no two days alike. Sometimes he would pass hours in a complete *assoupissement* of his intellectual faculties, then suddenly arouse himself, and set about any study he chose to pursue with an ardour perfectly incomprehensible to his friends—stealing even hours and hours from the night till he had accomplished that which he had tasked himself to do. Afterwards he would resume his former listlessness, or else rush into a course of gaiety as much at variance with the previous tenor of his life as that of a courtier's is from an anchorite's. He had also a literary taste, and

could turn an epigram or a sonnet extremely well, had a genuine poetical vein, and felt too well satisfied with his own abilities to sue directly or indirectly for praise.

Strangely enough, however, his character was greatly modified by those of the persons with whom he associated. If he happened to be in the company of one who was rather deficient in the necessary furniture of the brain, he appeared (perhaps from politeness), poverty-struck in that particular, too; if he was with a pedant he would lisp forth trite aphorisms picked out from all the authors since the Deluge, and with consummate skill and provoking nonchalance maintain an argument, parry a home-thrust, or point a witticism, while he picked up a lady's fan, or examined a vaunted belle with a criticising eye.

Yet Lord Ravenshill could feel sincerely, and act rightly at times, for notwithstanding all his affectation, and partiality for satire, he loved simplicity, and when in the society of a man whose character he

approved of, and of whose honesty and sense he did not doubt, he was as sincere and straightforward as truth itself. And thus he was held in different estimation by all his friends ; the sensible part of them thought him talented, kind hearted, though dissipated ; the fools imagined him to be as wise as themselves, and the learned tolerated him as a promising but unbearably impertinent addition to their ranks. With his own family he was misunderstood ; and judged by its several individuals very differently : the marquis, his father, held but a poor opinion of him, for he saw that not all his talents had saved him from the usual routine of idle amusements, which the heirs of wealth and honours are generally dragged into ; his mother loved him almost idolatrously, and esteemed him the centre of all perfection ; Florence thought him selfish, though she knew he was not deficient in abilities, and the Dowager, who was a woman of strong sense and just discrimination, alone fathomed his true disposition, and



estimated rightly the good and evil it contained.

Lord Ravenshill, however, was generally liked, especially by the softer sex, with whom the beauty of his person, and the quiet elegance of his address, went a great way to secure his favour. Yet he sought their approbation in a different manner to what the generality of men do ; with a just capacity for discriminating character, his lordship never offered an outrageous compliment where he saw it would offend the nice taste of the lady he wished to please ; nor did he think every woman a credulous simpleton until she unequivocally showed signs of being such, and even when he felt persuaded any woman he talked to was really no better than a fool, he never let her perceive that he rated her accordingly, but still discoursed easily and readily upon subjects which her depth of understanding could not comprehend, as if he was certain she was perfectly conversant with them ; till he knew that a lady did not wish to assume any other character than her own, till he

knew she was as true and as simple in all her ideas and words as he wished all women to be, he never suited his manners or discourse to the bent of her real disposition or abilities, but moulded them to the pretensions she put forth in society. Thus every woman thought Lord Ravenshill imagined she was what her vanity wished her friends to think her, and consequently he was a general favourite with all the ladies he ranked among his acquaintance.


Knowing this to be the case, his lordship naturally, and without much presumption, thought himself a good judge of the various caprices and whims of the softer sex, even from those of the flirt, down to those of the devotee. He had not, however, a bad opinion of women in general; fathoming their minds as he did, he could not have it; for when a man really takes the trouble of finding out their real characters, he for the most part knows them to be infinitely better in heart and mind than they at first appear.

Lord Ravenshill discovered considerable acumen in this task, and after some little practice readily discovered, where habit, education, or artifice, showed the real disposition in a false light or else entirely veiled it.

It is not to be wondered at then, considering the generally truthful calculations he made respecting womankind, that he felt disposed to rely much upon his penetration and skill in so doing, and thus he rapidly condensed the observations he made upon the character of an individual who had lately occupied much of his thoughts, into a little sketch of her disposition, and thoroughly believed he was right in all his conclusions. The person referred to was Annie, whose quiet simplicity of manner, and unhesitating mode of telling the truth he thought affected, and therefore secretly blamed its assumption, although he allowed its display to be rather amusing. He imagined it was a feint of character adopted from a motive of coquetry, for the latter tenor of her conversation with him gave

rise to these suspicions, and the displeasure she at first evinced at his visits to the cottage he accounted a mere show, assumed perhaps in the spirit of a calculating coquette, who acted with a view to see how deep an impression her charms could make upon the heart or fancy of a young nobleman.

Lord Ravenshill smiled to himself at the idea his own reasonings awakened within him, smiled at the barefaced simplicity of her manœuvres to effect this, and thought with comfort to himself that although he had been rather unsuccessful of late in timing his visits at the Cottage, her anxiously expressed desire of seeing him again would quietly contrive to bring about another meeting, while at the same time he hoped it would soften the peculiar austerity of manner which it was her pleasure at present to affect. And when the following incident occurred, nearly a month after his first visit to the Cottage, he imagined it had its rise in the above uncharitable suggestions of his fancy



On a damp, misty evening as his lordship was returning along the high road from a ride he had taken in the vicinity of the Park, within two miles distance of the Lion Inn, he saw Annie and her father seated upon a low stile which separated an adjoining meadow from the high-road. Lord Ravenshill, as he came near them slackened the pace of his horse merely for the pleasure of gazing more leisurely at the beautiful face of the young girl; yet he intended to pass on without speaking, because he thought that the presence of the old man would be no agreeable addition to a *tête-à-tête* interview with her. Great was his surprise then, when Annie, after two or three hesitating glances cast towards him as he approached, stepped into the middle of the road, advanced towards his horse's head, and at once addressed him.

"You are going towards D—, my lord," she asked eagerly, "will you then, for the sake of charity, let your servant stop at the Lion Inn, and bid Job Thompson send some sort of vehicle here for my

father—say for Mr. Cummins. He is ill, he is faint ; he has sprained his ankle, and cannot walk another step, and we are full two miles from home. I cannot leave him alone ; I have seen no one pass by for these ten minutes and more—no one may pass again for another hour—will you do this ?”

Lord Ravenshill looked curiously down upon the pleading countenance uplifted towards his own, and in another moment he answered, “Do not doubt it—he shall go there this instant. Is your father ill ? Can I render you any help ?”

And leaping from his horse he hurried to the spot where the old man sat, at the same time giving orders to the groom, who followed him, to proceed to D—, with Annie’s message, which the man accordingly did.

Mr. Cummins was sitting in apparent pain on the stile where his lordship had first observed him, and when the latter advanced towards him and offered any assistance that lay in his power to afford, he turned round and thanked him for his

kindness. He did not seem so ill or stern as on their first meeting, and bore the accident with apparent patience.

"I thank you, sir," he said my daughter would not have troubled you if we could possibly have got home in any other way. Had you not passed by I do not know what we should have done, for I did not wish Annie to leave me utterly alone."

"It is no trouble, no trouble, my good man," replied Lord Ravenshill, carelessly tapping the toe of his boot with his riding whip, and he glanced towards Annie. "The only thing which troubles me at present is the fact of seeing your daughter exposed for so long a time to this damp mist that has gathered so heavily around us ; the more so because I perceive she has divested herself of her warm shawl, and clothed you with it, which, considering the very light garments she wears, was a most injudicious proceeding, and I would advise you to cover yourself up with this old plaid of mine, and bid her resume it." So saying, Lord Ravenshill untwisted a Scotch

scarf that he wore over his shoulders, and offered it to the old man.

"My father feels the cold extremely," said Annie, hastily, as she listened to his lordship's last words; "but I do not; therefore, pray, my lord, do not disencumber yourself of your shawl, I am sure he will not accept it."

"I am sure your father will," returned Lord Ravenshill, "seeing that he is older than either you or I, he must know the consequences of your exposing yourself to this cold, thick mist in the manner you do; you will be wet through and through before you reach home."

"True, my good lord," said old Mr. Cummins, very quietly, "your remarks are exceedingly judicious; I will take your scarf, and Annie shall have her shawl."

"No, no," urged Annie, "I am warm enough."

"But I say, yes, yes," replied Mr. Cummins, as he unwound the shawl from round him, and gave it to his daughter, while he took the plaid from the hands of Lord

Ravenshill. "Thank you, my lord—a charitable action will always bear fruit some day or other—look you to this one."

"Common-place observations do not sound so well from his lips as from those of his daughter," thought Lord Ravenshill, as he saw Mr. Cummins comfortably envelopping himself in his plaid, while he himself was left shivering in a thin, summer *pdletôt*. Yet he had offered it, in the first instant, with the sincerest good will, for he saw the old man was very aged and ill, and was therefore a greater object of commiseration than his daughter, and he even now felt some satisfaction in knowing that Annie was safe from the dangers he had, a few moments since, so energetically described. Perhaps, like many other people, his lordship only wanted a greater show of gratitude on the part of the persons he obliged, and then he would have been thoroughly satisfied; but both the old man and his daughter, after having once expressed their thanks for his kind-

ness, did not apparently think it necessary to do so again, and Lord Ravenshill was not gratified with another word about the matter. The conversation then was upheld upon indifferent subjects, till a hack-carriage, from Job Thompson's, came rumbling up the lane, and stopped before the spot where they stood, when Mr. Cummins bade his daughter tell the driver to come and assist him into the vehicle.

The young girl obeyed her father, and the driver, with the assistance of Lord Ravenshill's groom, who had returned with the fly, placed Mr. Cummins within it, after which, Annie, simply repeating her thanks, entered it, too, and the crazy vehicle turned off towards Brook Cottage, while his lordship, remounting his horse, took the road to the Park.

The next day, as the sun was spreading his evening beams far and wide over the green lanes and meadows of D——, Lord Ravenshill sauntered towards the cottage, *furnished* as he knew himself to be with a

passably good claim upon the civility of its inmates, and not doubting but that he should receive a better welcome than he had yet done. And in this idea he was not disappointed; for Annie, who happened to see him through the open latticed window of the parlour, rose from her seat as soon as he stayed his horse before the gate, with the apparent intention of dismounting, advanced to meet him, and upon his expressing a wish to know how Mr. Cummins was, led the way into the house.

Here he found the old man seated near the fire in a large arm-chair, in company with the elderly female whom Annie called her aunt, and whose guests, both she and her father were, as he afterwards learned, in the course of conversation. A vacant seat drawn close to the window, on which lay a volume of Corneille, Lord Ravenshill instantly guessed to be Annie's, and looking round the room for further signs of her peculiar tastes, with a slight surprise, he discovered, amidst the homely furniture of

the apartment, a piccolo piano, and a plain guitar case, a crochet basket, filled with pretty coloured silks, and some large, unfinished sketches in water colours. The presence of these articles in the very plainly furnished little room he entered, his lordship noticed at a glance, and they confirmed him in his previous conjectures that Annie had been given a better education than was usual to her station in life. After enquiring then about the health of Mr. Cummins, and receiving a satisfactory reply, he addressed himself to her in accordance with the pretensions which he divined she put forth, made her take a prominent part in the discourse that he endeavoured to open with her father, and soon perceived that both the parent and child were a pair of unequivocal originals.

Mr. Cummins he saw was a man of a peculiar disposition ; strong, quiet sense combined with great firmness appeared in his remarks and opinions, while partly revealed by the same means a proud im-

petuous spirit could be seen wrestling as it were with the bonds its own judgment imposed by a self-proscribed obedience to the rules of strict humility. The character of the daughter was moulded upon that of the father, but in a gentler and more womanly form, for a vein of charity was apparent in her discourse, which had no part in Mr. Cummins'. He appeared to be a cold-hearted but strictly moral man, she a gentle, kind girl whom her father had taught to think, speak, and act, with an openly expressed rectitude of sentiment almost puritanically severe, and which Lord Ravenshill, who had an eminent hatred to preaching moralists, could not help thinking slightly tinged with hypocrisy. Yet his Lordship allowed her to be clever, sensible, and pleasing ; he acknowledged that the charms of her beauty were rare, and therefore, notwithstanding the Quaker-like simplicity of her attire and address, he felt rather disappointed when the arrival of Sidney Beckford, who came on a professional visit to Mr. Cummins,

compelled him to rise and take his leave. Annie interested and amused him, she was something different from the generality of women he met with in the world, and he resolved to see her again, though in doing so he ran the chance of continually meeting Sidney Beckford who, as he recalled a disagreeable piece of folly to his mind, he never more wished to meet.

As he rode back to the Park, Lord Ravenshill asked himself a question, which he had willingly shunned till the present moment, and this was what were the feelings which induced him to prosecute the idle intimacy he had commenced with Annie. Pique, perhaps, at the cold indifference she had evinced at his attentions to her, urged him in the first instance to try and vanquish it, and now that her reserve had changed almost into gratitude, the charm of seeing the frost of her manners melting away, allured him to pursue it farther. A man always sees something peculiarly pleasing in a woman when she thus yields a tacit acknowledgment of his

attractions ; and this his Lordship felt in reference to Annie, who he now saw was beginning to feel his, as he in fact from the very first wished her to do.

Therefore he pursued the acquaintance he had begun at the cottage, and gradually won Annie to look forward with pleasure for his visits. As for the end, he proposed to himself in thus toying with the heart of the young girl whom he had contrived to lay under the obligation of bearing his acquaintance, he never clearly made it out to himself ; he rather shunned the question, for notwithstanding Lord Ravenshill was dissipated and careless, he was not perfectly heartless, and never deliberately planned any scheme of villany. Generally he was swayed by circumstances : he was one of those men, too, who consider that if evil is easily accomplished it is scarcely evil at all.

Disagreeable subjects of thought his Lordship avoided most pertinaciously, and so he shunned the one now beneath his

consideration ; although even in the first hasty glance in which he recognised it as disagreeable, he could not help perceiving Annie might possibly love him, and that the consequences of this conclusion would be, either that he must leave her to pine in hopeless affection, or else lead her to that which for the moment his own heart shrunk from doing—to ruin ; for marriage with the low born and portionless Annie was what he did not think of—he, the embarrassed but noble heir of mortgaged estates and empty titles. He shut his eyes, however, upon the prospect the one quick sting of his own conscience taught him to glance at ; he did not wish to think of it. Drawn on by a growing interest in Annie which he did not endeavour to repress, he sought her society more and more, and soon hardly a day passed without his Lordship's going to Brook Cottage, and whiling away an hour or two with her, notwithstanding that on his way thither and back he sometimes met Sidney Beck-

ford, as his own mind had prophesied to him that he would do.

But Lord Ravenshill did not let these disagreeable rencontres deter him from visiting at the Cottage ; he was remarkable for the coolness with which he could give the cut direct to unpleasant persons—sometimes to unpleasant reminiscences, and he admirably displayed this convenient accomplishment the second or third time he met Sidney Beckford, and passed him by with that unreadable steady glance, which people oftentimes bestow upon a stone wall, when there is nothing more interesting to look at.


CHAPTER II.

Where none attends what boots it to complain ?

Fairfax's Jerusalem Delivered.

“Well, Dr. Beckford,” said Mrs. Summers to Sidney, two or three days before the time fixed for his departure from D——. “Well, Dr. Beckford, the very weather, here-a-bouts, seems to mourn your leaving us ; it has rained ever since you fixed the day for doing so. However, I suppose you cannot stay longer with us, as Mr. Winkelmann wishes you to return.”

“I should be most happy if you would consent to give us your company for



another week or so," said Dr. Summers, who just then entered the room, and consequently overheard his wife's words, "most happy ; but I dare say Winkelmann cannot spare you."

"No, sir—I am afraid not," answered Sidney, rather eagerly ; "it is absolutely necessary that I should return to London directly."

"Aye," replied Dr. Summers, "it has been very dull for you here, no doubt—town is preferable, even though you may live in a garret. But hold," he added, a moment afterwards, as he saw Sidney about to leave the apartment, "I have something to ask you ; the other night, when you were at Mrs. Oliver's, I was sent for by a Mr. Cummins, of Brook Cottage, whom it seems you have been attending during the last month—do you know anything of him ?—he is a stranger to this place, is he not ?"

"I believe so," returned Sidney, "at least, I gathered as much from his conversation. He and his daughter are the

cried Dr. Summers, suddenly addressing Sidney ; “ how did you get on with the dowager ? She asked for you the last time I called there—you leave on Thursday—I think you had better visit her again.”

“ As you like, sir,” replied Sidney, “ I will do so then.”

Nevertheless, he did not ; for he took leave of D——, on the following Thursday, without once mentioning the inmates of the Park. It seemed as if he entirely forgot them in his eagerness to return to London.

A week or two after his arrival in town, Sidney Beckford, during some of his leisure moments, strolled up to Lincoln’s Inn to see Harry Fielding—whom he knew he should soon meet at Mr. Winkelmann’s or elsewhere, and who, he feared, might think it singular if he did not inform him of his return from D——, as they were on terms of great intimacy. This latter idea had birth in a newly awakened distrust of appearances

which his last strange interview with Frances suggested to him ; in past times he would never have thought of paying so ceremonious a visit ; but now he felt it a necessary one : we are never strictly attentive to appearances, till we have something to conceal.

So Sidney went to Mr. Fielding's house in Lincoln's Inn, and entering the outer office passed into the one which he knew was appropriated to his friend's use. Here he found Harry seated at a large table ; with a mass of business-like papers before him, amongst which, however, he discovered a novel, and on its open pages the eyes of the studious lawyer were bent, as if in the act of attentively perusing it. Harry started up with a look of annoyance, and a heightened colour, as he heard Sidney's approach, but when he saw who it was he advanced to meet him carelessly enough.

" Sid, old fellow, is it you ?" said he, joyously, " right glad am I to see you, though your entrance gave me a terrible

shock at first, for I thought you were a client, and deeming you so, imagined I should gain but little credit in your opinion by reading such a parchment as that."

And he pointed to the book he had just been perusing.

" 'Tis the last new work," he continued, " and I was in the middle of a scene which had some reference to my own affairs. Sid, Sid, I am a miserable fellow after all."

Sidney glanced towards his handsome friend, whose good-natured face was at that moment lighted up with a most agreeable smile, and laughed.

" I do not mean to say," replied Harry, as he walked to the fire, and, taking up the poker, gave it a very useless stir, " I do not mean to say that I am about to hang or drown myself, Sid ; I am not come to that point of desperation yet—never shall I hope. Nevertheless, I am miserable enough, and shall be more so presently."

Sidney continued to laugh ; he scarcely thought Harry serious.

"Now, do not laugh, that's exasperating, Sid," rejoined Harry, "I thought I should get some pity from you, though you have not yet

' Seen decline upon my brow,
Or watch'd my mind's convulsion leave it weak.' "

"A plague upon my well-conditioned face and good complexion ; they never suffer any one to believe I can be miserable. When I feel a little sentimental, every one laughs at the idea of such a grinning Goliath as I am reckoned attempting to be so ; all the girls turn up their pretty noses in derision at me, and the men stare as if I were just then becoming a natural curiosity. Everybody doubts me, no one pities or sympathises with me—can you conceive a more wretched state of existence, my dear fellow ?"

And Harry gave another vigorous stir to the fire. "I can only conceive that by fits and starts you are ridiculously whim-

sical," replied Sidney, "that you lay claim to commiseration for being very happy."

"There!" returned Harry, smiling, "there's a friend's pity for my present distress. Sid, what do you deserve?"

"Thanks for plain speaking," answered he.

"No reproaches for judging too hastily," rejoined his friend, "listen to me, and I will tell you a tale something like—

How the squire of low degree
Lov'd the king's daughter of Hungary.

"Will you hear it?"

"Does it relate to yourself?"


"It does, most sapient Mentor," returned Harry "take your chair nearer the fire, the governor's out, and will not be in for another hour or two; so we may make ourselves perfectly at home. Here's a cigar—ah! you don't smoke; well, it's a bad habit; but a very pleasant one. Now for my tale! Sid, I love you, old fellow, you

from Lincoln's Inn to Brompton, and I was thus, every morning, obliged to walk or ride into town unto these detestable offices. Well, to make a long story short, I must tell you that, one showery day, when in actual perverseness, I suppose, to my good mother's injunctions, I chose to walk. As I entered Kensington Gardens, and proceeded along the ha-ha walk towards Hyde Park, I saw the fair stranger and her governess taking shelter in one of those alcoves, which are here and there scattered about the grounds. They were wet to the skin, for a heavy shower had come on suddenly ; so with youthful civility, I offered them an umbrella, which I carried with me on that morning, and advised them to hurry home as it was scarcely prudent to stand in such a cold, damp place, their clothes being soaked through and through. They acknowledged the justness of my advice, Sid ; bandied to and fro with me some civilities upon depriving my worthy self of my only shelter, finally accepted it, and then allowed me

to accompany them to the garden-gate where they courteously dismissed me and my umbrella, alledging that their carriage would soon drive up and take them away. Well, I was silly enough to obey them—had I only stayed to see who they were I might have saved myself years of anxiety—aye, years! my dear fellow, for this incident that I am now relating to you happened about four twelve months back. But I did not; I left them at their pressing entreaties; I thought they wished to get rid of me—which was the truth, I suppose. I felt too proud to force my company upon them for a moment longer, and therefore proceeded on my way to town.”

“What more?” said Sidney, and he looked anxious for the further relation of his friend’s tale.

“Why, I went to the gardens five or six days after that rencontre,” continued Harry, “to see if I could meet her, and I did. She was walking with a French governess or servant, when I joined her and with unblushing assurance asked her,



whether she had caught cold since I last saw her."

"And—and how did she reply to you?" demanded Sidney, in a tone of restless impatience.

"How?" rejoined Harry, "civilly and sweetly enough, Sid; she thanked me for my past politeness, and entered into a lively conversation with me."

"She did?" said Sidney.

"Yes," replied his companion, "there, don't look shocked, my dear fellow; I know it was not exactly the thing for a young girl to do; but she was scarcely in her teens at that time, I should say, and I am sure saw no wrong in it. It did not then lessen her in my esteem, it will scarcely do so in yours, when you hear the end of the affair. So we talked; I addressed her companion several times, to win her sanction to my rather bold proceedings; but she could not understand, or speak a word of English, although she did not seem displeased about her pupil's forming my acquaintance—perhaps, she

thought it a convenient one, as very soon after I saw her with a lover of her own I imagine, for a dark, Jewish-looking mustachioed fellow used to join her whenever I thrust my society upon her companion. Thus day after day, I and my pretty little friend had many very pleasant *tête-à-têtes*, and generally parted mutually pleased with each other. I was a romance loving fool at that period, Sid, and though I learnt her name was Florence Lovaine, and knew she was a gentleman's daughter, I never thoroughly enquired who her parents were. I felt contented to look at her, speak with her, for I was decidedly in love, and would you believe it ? I never even disobeyed the governess's command of not following them to their carriage. Had I done so, perhaps, the liveries of the men, or the arms on the panel might have undeceived me ; but I did not, and I was well punished for my stupidity."

"That is not all," said Sidney, seeing *that Harry paused*, "what next?"

"What next ?" answered Harry, "why

at last came the death blow to all the hopes of my first dream of love, Sid. After a year's intimacy with her I found out I was most irretrievably in love, and I at length became desirous of being introduced to her family. I told her this ; she looked frightened, and said that such a scheme could not be effected just then. Soon after I lost sight of her for about a twelvemonth, and when I next met her she appeared cold and distant in her manner towards me, even tried to pass me by without speaking—I asked her the reason why."

"And what was her answer?" asked Sidney, bending his eyes fixedly upon his companion's face.

"I will tell you, Sid ; I don't mind telling you," replied Harry, throwing away the moiety of the cigar he had lighted, and leaning over the dusty mantel-piece, with a look of true feeling. "It would have made me love the girl, if I had not loved her before. When I asked her to explain the change in her behaviour towards me,

after some moments of utter silence, she turned round, and a deep blush came over her face—"By your manners and sentiments," said she, "from the first moment of our acquaintance I have perceived you to be a gentleman, and therefore as a gentleman I know you will listen and understand the few words I now wish to speak. I was very young—almost a child, when I first permitted you to address me—to meet me in these gardens, I scarcely thought it indiscreet; for fresh from the tuition of a romance-loving and unprincipled governess, I had not then that rectitude of sentiment which my own better reason has since taught me, and thus I listened to an idle freak of my fancy, and with false generosity concealed my real rank from you. I neither cared for, or even foresaw the evil consequences which has necessarily ensued from so doing; an improbable and childish dream of an impossible future, clouded my reason; it has since cleared away. You wish to call upon my parents? I have to ask your pardon for deceiving

you as I have done ; you cannot become acquainted with them, for we move in very different ranks in society. I—I am the daughter of Lord Chillingworth ; you, if I understand aright, you are but a solicitor's son. Do you comprehend me ? I fear not. Cannot you conceive the impossibility of a further acquaintance between us ? the reason of my past coldness ? We must never meet again—never more speak to each other, Mr. Fielding. Receive this explanation charitably, forgive my girlish folly—excuse it if you can, it will be, it is painfully repented of even now, and ease me of the apprehensions I have lately suffered—say you will not presume upon my past indiscretion—promise me that you will neither meet nor speak to me again—promise me this ! I ask it on the faith I have in your generosity.' Sid, how do you think I answered her ?”

“I cannot guess,” replied Sidney, constrainedly.

“I gave her the promise she wished to have,” returned Harry, “and we parted

friends—fast friends, Sid, though we have never spoken to each other since that moment.”

Sidney Beckford stooped to pick up a letter that Harry’s elbow had pushed off the chimney-piece a few moments before, saying as he did so,

“ Was it easy for you to part with her thus quietly ?”

“ Easy !” replied his friend, suddenly and impatiently shifting his position near the fire, and more closely approaching Sidney. “ easy ! why I loved the little creature, Sid, loved her sincerely, and I gave the death-blow to many a cherished hope when we agreed to discontinue our intimacy.”

“ You acted rightly, Harry,” said Sidney, after a slight pause.

“ Aye,” replied he, “ that is my chief consolation in the whole affair. I acted not only rightly but wisely ; for even if I had continued to speak to her with or without her consent, the acquaintance would have only entangled us further in a hopeless attachment, which must have

been miserably broken off in the end ; as her father of course would never have sanctioned it. A run-a-way match I would not have proposed under any circumstances, the more especially as she was my superior in rank, for I should not have particularly relished the idea of being looked down upon with contempt in my wife's family, or even that of dragging a rash and inexperienced girl into the miseries of an ill-assorted marriage. I met her for the last time, Sid, about two years ago ; but I have seen her several times since then, at the theatre, opera, in Regent Street, Bond Street ; we never speak, however, never even give each other the slightest token of recognition."

" It is better that you do not," answered Sidney.

" Even so, Sid ; yet for the life of me I cannot forget her, and if there were any possible way of winning her, openly and honourably, no difficulties should hinder me from doing so ; for I love her still ; and here I am, day after day, year after

CHAPTER III.

It was with considerable difficulty Sidney complied with Harry Fielding's request that he should visit his mother and sister, and weeks passed away before he did so. He shrank from meeting Frances, who he imagined might possibly have guessed the real cause of the emotion he had betrayed during his last visit at the villa ; he dreaded to see her cold and apprehensive of his presumptuously interpreting her inexplicable words, and therefore he forebore to go there, till the reiterated invitations of his friend obliged him to do so. Still, however, he went with reluctance, and finally

planned his visit to take place on a Sunday evening, because he hoped on that day to find all the family at home, and thus avoid the chance of being ushered into the presence of Frances alone, as he oftentimes was, when her father and brother were at their offices in town, and Mrs. Fielding engaged in some household duties, which precluded her immediate attendance in the drawing-room.

Upon the afternoon then of a cold, winter's Sabbath he sat down to dinner with Mr. Winkelmann, intending to visit Brompton in the evening.

The weather was sharp and frosty, the roads were as hard and dry as rock ; and Sidney, with the intention of keeping himself warm, resolved to walk the distance to Fairy Villa, as he well knew that a long drive in a cab, or any other sort of vehicle would chill him to an icicle before he arrived there. This plan he therefore carried into execution, and arrived at Brompton about eight o'clock in the evening. The

family were at home, and he was shown into the drawing-room, which appeared thoroughly illumined by the blaze of a large fire, although no candles were yet lighted. As he entered, he looked round the apartment to see whether there was any one within it, and in the next moment, Frances Fielding rose from the sofa near the hearth, and advanced to meet him. He gave a second glance round the room, as she approached, and perceived that they were alone ; then summoning up all his self-control, he replied, calmly enough, to the half murmured greeting which she addressed to him. A few moments afterwards, Frances turned from his side, and resuming her seat by the fire, remained perfectly silent, with her eyes bent steadfastly on the ground, till Sidney asked for Mrs. Fielding and her brother.

Sidney's was a simple question ; and it was composedly spoken, but not so composedly was it answered. Frances Fielding happened to have a severe cold on that

evening, and having felt ill, and out of spirits all the day, she had self-disposed herself to be miserable, as many young girls occasionally do, by reviewing and grieving over every disagreeable feeling of the past or future they can possibly think of, without allowing a single hope to brighten the dismal prospect thus pictured to their minds. She had her sorrows—every person on earth has ; she had been grieving over them, and a few tears were falling from her eyes, when Sidney entered the room, consequently, she was in no mood to speak calmly to him. Her tones trembled, her words were uttered with difficulty, and her heart began to beat violently from the fear of having awakened Sidney's observation.

“Mama is rather unwell to-day, she is up-stairs,” said she, “Harry and papa are gone to call on Mr. White.”

Frances stopped ; she dared not say another word, for the tears which she endeavoured to retain within her eyes flowed

over their lids, and with a feint of smoothing the long flaxen ringlets which fell around her face, she raised her hand, and tried to dash them away unseen. But she could not, for she felt Sidney was looking at her, when she heard him say—

“And you, Miss Fielding, you are also ill, I fear?”

Frances made a vain effort to reply : she began to articulate some words, faltered in doing so, and, at last, clasping her little hands over her flushing countenance, fairly sobbed outright. Men generally feel uncomfortable at the sight of a woman's tears—when they are young, it affects their feelings, when they are old, it irritates their tempers ; Sidney was young, and Sidney had a kind heart, therefore, he rose uneasily from his chair, as he saw Frances weep, and not knowing the cause of her emotion, an expression of absolute wretchedness passed over his countenance, as he said—

“Mrs. Fielding is not very ill, I hope ?

Surely I should have known it from Mr. Winkelmann if she had been so—you are not alarmed on her account, I trust ?”

“No, no, mama will soon be well,” answered Frances ; and she evidently endeavoured to conquer her agitation. She said no more ; and both she and Sidney remained silent for some minutes. During that time, however, the former imagined she might be thinking of their last meeting, and was annoyed at its recollection even now. Her downcast eyes, and rapidly flushing cheek, combined with her increased agitation when he addressed her, convinced him he was right in his conjectures, and demurring but for one instant, ere he mentioned the circumstance, in the next, he said, abruptly—

“This cruel embarrassment, Miss Fielding, does it arise from my unfortunate intrusion, when I last saw you ? Pardon me for naming the circumstance, but I fear that if I do not, it will always be a source of annoyance to us both. No inference you would wish unthought of, could reason-

ably be drawn from the words I overheard ; they had relation to your own inward musings, and, as such, they have rested on my memory. I have not applied them to any sense that can irritate or annoy you, as I fear you imagine I have." And here Sidney Beckford, for a moment, paused, then a death-like pallor overspread his countenance, as he once more turned to address her—"Forgive me," he said, "forgive me, for even supposing you could possibly imagine I had the madness to apply them to one so utterly unworthy of your thoughts as myself ; but I have forced myself to speak plainly to ease you of the slightest doubts upon the subject for the future ; I have done so, because I know the eccentric fancies which sometimes rise unbidden to our minds, and I dreaded lest they should have occupied yours. Do not think, Miss Fielding, I have forgotten the relation in which we stand to each other, that it was your hand which first succoured me, that it is to you I am indebted, in the first place, for life, station,—every-

thing, in short, which I owe to Mr. Winkelmann. If my present words seem like presumption, in charity forgive them, and, believe me, I only utter them to prevent any misunderstanding arising, where none in all reasonable conscience should be."

He looked towards Frances, as he finished speaking, hoping for a word or sign expressive of her accepting the explanation he offered ; but she sat perfectly silent and motionless, and seemed to take no notice of his words, save that crimson blushes increased the delicate peach bloom of her cheeks to a deep red, and that the pencilled eyebrows were slightly contracted over her large violet eyes. Sidney waited yet another minute, and then he spoke again—

"Are you angry, Miss Fielding, at my having spoken too plainly? Yet I did it all for the best ; the thoughts and feelings which I had on that occasion have been sincerely uttered."

But still Frances sat still and quiet, not answering, not looking towards him.

"Perhaps," continued Sidney, after a

long silence, and he spoke in a thick, hurried tone, and half turned away from the sight of his companion, "Perhaps you *saw* the first effect your words and action had upon me, the madman's joy they awoke in my heart, and guessed its cause. If so, Miss Fielding, be generous, and forgive it—it was quickly restrained—quickly changed into bitter sorrow."

Frances Fielding trembled slightly at Sidney's words, and glanced towards him with a look of surprise, while the crimson glow upon her cheeks mantled stronger and stronger ; but he did not perceive this, for he was not looking towards her.

"Do not believe," he said after another pause, during which he vainly hoped Frances would speak, "do not believe that because from childhood I have worshipped you as the brightest star in my existence, I, the beggar of the streets, the deformed, ever dreamed, or can dream of hope. That moment of delirious joy was a moment of madness ; one thought of what I am, quelled it for ever. I then understood

your words as bearing reference to anything rather than that which they seemed to point to—so I do now. I know, in another man's case the circumstances might have been interpreted into a hope that you were not wholly indifferent to him,—in my own it could not. Raise your eyes, Miss Fielding, for one moment, glance at me, and say whether I, knowing as I do, the full deformity of my appearance, could have dared to hope it had been overlooked. That glance will satisfy your scruples, calm your present uneasiness, and make you consider me, as you once considered me, in the light of a friend, who never, even in thought, has been so presumptuous as your fears imagine him to be."

Frances looked up ; not in obedience to Sidney's request, but involuntarily, and hastily. A soft, veiled look, a deep blush, which as it mounted to her fair temples deepened more and more in the rich scarlet of its hue, might have whispered bright hopes to other than Sidney, but he, perfectly persuaded of his own inability

to awaken love in the heart of any woman, attributed it only to the same cause as had occasioned her previous confusion, and while her glance for a moment dwelt upon the harsh, strong features of his own countenance, he wondered that no expression of contempt, or of quiet assurance grew within her eyes. Suddenly those large, pensive eyes were bent downwards again, but the blush still deepened, and some seconds of silence passed away.

"You love me?" at length she murmured, half inaudibly, "Dr. Beckford, do you really love me? I am so very childish—that can scarcely be true."

Not even Sidney with all his humility could repress a sudden accession of hope from rushing to his heart, at these words of Frances, uttered as they were in a soft, silvery, trembling tone of voice, though the moment after, with a feeling of contempt at his own folly, he repressed it and said in a low, faltering tone—

"It would be but repeating my former offence to say I do."

"No, no," almost whispered Frances, in reply, and she seemed to wait for some word or look from Sidney, but receiving none, she bent down her head, and murmured again, "no, no, for I love you."

Sidney Beckford turned towards her with a quick start of surprise, a flushing brow, and an eager, searching glance that seemed to penetrate into her very soul. He heard the words distinctly, and yet he scarcely believed them, and the doubts which arose at the same time as the rapture they awoke within him were expressed in his words. No loverlike expressions of gratitude or affection came to his lips; passing his hand over his brow, as if to collect the scattered thoughts beneath it, his mind rested upon the improbability of his quiet and serious character, eliciting any tribute of affection from the heart of a young girl, and when he heard Frances avow she loved him, the mental query he asked himself was uttered a moment after

by his lips. It was expressed in the words —“ And for what ?”

Frances glanced towards the strongly agitated, and pallid countenance before her again, clasped her little hands tightly together, as if in embarrassment, bent down her beautiful head, so richly clad with its fair light tresses, and answered tremulously, “ For all your goodness, Dr. Beckford—to me—to Harry.”

“ Goodness !” repeated Sidney, and he drew nearer to her, his frame trembling with emotion, and his dark cheek pale from the excess of happiness oppressing him,—“ to you ?”

“ Oh, yes !” answered Frances, slightly rising from her seat, and speaking at first with some difficulty, “ have you not been very good to me, Dr. Beckford ? Do you not recollect the long, long evenings when you so patiently taught me drawing and painting ? the books you have so often lent me ? and the many, many times I used to consult you about my studies, and you so

kindly directed me how to proceed with them? But," added she, suddenly losing the half childish way in which she began to address him, and speaking earnestly, yet very tremulously, "But I will tell you more, Dr. Beckford; for I know you will not feel hurt—not even though I touch upon a subject which at times must be a painful one to you, because I am certain you will understand why I do so. Do you remember the day we spent at Epping Forest? when the idle raillery of my brother and Alfred Mortimer, pained you, and you confessed to me it did? I never forgot that circumstance—it lingered in my memory—I continually thought of it, and—and endeavoured to please you. Mamma too, told me to be kind to you—I tried to be so—shall I say why? Will you forgive me if I do? I was so, then, through pity; yes, I pitied you; thinking that you needed compassion, thinking that many others would not, thinking you inferior in every earthly advantage to those around you.'

"And you thought right," said Sidney,

as leaning against the side of the mantel piece, near the sofa where Frances sat, he bent over its elbow, and gazed earnestly into her countenance.

“No,” answered she, raising her dark eyes to his face with a quiet, earnest look, “No, I thought wrong ; you needed no pity ; it was admiration and not pity which ought to have been given to one like you. I am childish, Dr. Beckford, I am weak, I am a woman, brought up like a woman, and never taught to look into the workings of a strong, firm spirit, yet I read yours. I know not why I did so ; but as time flew on, your heart and mind became more and more unveiled to my view, and then I scorned myself for pitying you. My feelings grew into admiration and esteem, and I shrunk back from offering you my compassion. I knew you more favoured with Heaven’s best gifts than the many who, as I had done, pitied you ; and when I saw a mind like yours stooping to conciliate my friendship. and felt it leading me on to higher, better paths of thought

than my own, could I remain perfectly untouched by such kindness? No, my mind bent to wiser good by yours, trusted in it and sought its shelter, my heart became your own. You ask me why I love you? Know yourself for what you are, and then, then you will not ask the question again."

Frances Fielding paused, the eager enthusiasm with which she had spoken subsided, while her little hand, that in the earnestness of her speech had wreathed itself amidst her flaxen ringlets, and held two or three of them pressed tightly against her throat, fell quietly by her side, as she once more bent her eyes to the ground. And for some minutes Sidney stood like one in a dream, the perceptions of his mind, the very feelings of his heart, dulled by the excess of happiness which had come so unexpectedly upon him, till at length the actual silence of the apartment recalled him to himself; he turned towards Frances, and poured forth in her listening ear, with all a lover's eloquence, the long hidden devotion of past years.

Was Sidney Beckford truly happy on that evening, when he left Fairy Villa to return home ? Ought he not to have been so, assured as he was of the love of one so beautiful and good as Frances ? And yet he was not ; amidst the rapture thrilling his heart as he turned from her dwelling place, a secret trouble had also placed a grief that he could not reveal or alleviate. The memories of past years began to throng around his head ; they dulled his present hopes, and once more brought to life fruitless and painful wishes, which had long slumbered there. "Abandoned, abandoned for ever, it cannot now be regained,—let the thought die !" he muttered, as he turned his steps homewards. "And will it thus die ?" he added, "no, it must be faced, sifted—how bitterly do we expiate each false step we make in life, how bitterly do we rue the consequences !"

He walked on ; he felt there was a poison-sting in all his joy ; yet soon the pain it caused him was lulled, as in each succeeding instant, he believed more and

more in the confiding love of Frances,—a love he had never hoped to gain, and which now he felt his own. He could not, indeed, be deceived in its truth or disinterestedness, for poor, plain, and deformed as he was, neither his position nor his wealth had won her affections, and thus, although he could scarcely conceive how, he felt that he was loved for himself alone.

Sidney's was a strange mind ; he eagerly accepted happiness when it came, but not without fear ; as he lifted the chalice of joy to his lips, he at the same moment thought it might be dashed from him, and often nerved himself against the blight of his dearest hopes, even in the moment of their seeming completion. He had been taught to do this by the continual adversity that he had in his earlier years encountered : adversity is, after all, the best teacher of self control—that is to say if her pupils are able to understand her lessons. True it is, however, that with those she has visited, the recollections of her warnings chasten the happiness it may sometimes be their

lot to experience into a less dreadless joy, and teach them to doubt its continuance. Sidney, beneath their influence, felt his present joy was insecure ; he knew it would be many years before he could be in a position to ask for the sanction of the parents of Frances to their marriage, and during that space of time he asked himself what would become of her ? Would she still continue to love him as truly as at present ? or would time do its usual work, and make the heart, as it grew older, renounce its more youthful feelings ? show her the way to forget him for another ? Sidney Beckford shrank from the prospect his own fears opened to his view, and in trying to escape from it, bent his mind upon another.

He saw himself united to Frances, while youth and beauty sat in their first bloom upon her brow ; he saw her delicate form clothed in rich garments, her fair white brow, her alabaster arms sparkling with radiant jewels, and her soft brilliant eyes glancing over a home where wealth and

taste set their seal upon every article within it ; the sunshine of happiness illumined it, and a glorious scene of earth and heaven in their loveliest seeming, girdled it in beauty.

Sidney gazed upon the fancied scene his imagination painted ; his heart thrilled with a strange rapture as he did so ; and then, a moment after, his mind turned from it, sickening at its own madness in having created it. He glanced around him with a hurried look, as if to thrust it from his thoughts. He was standing in the midst of Trafalgar Square, at that time, not so passably good-looking as it is now ; the night was clear, and the moon shining ; the tall spire of St. Martin's church seemed almost white in its clear, frosty radiance ; the harsh outlines of the National Gallery were softened into something like beauty, and the roofs of the surrounding houses were silvered over with the same ; the rattle of passing vehicles, the hurried tramp of the pedestrians sounded around him ; but he did not heed either one or the other.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Candour.—Is there any news abroad? No! nothing good I suppose. No! nothing but scandal! nothing but scandal.

School for Scandal.

Two or three days after that on which Frances and Sidney Beckford confessed their mutual affection for each other, the former told Mrs. Fielding what had happened between them.

Many mothers would have been thoroughly displeased at what they might have termed the incomprehensible presumption of Sidney; but Mrs. Fielding was not. Though desirous to see Frances well married, she yet did not particularly wish

her to wed a rich or handsome husband ; for her own experience of wealth and beauty, combined as they were in the person and circumstances of Mr. Fielding, had taught her to prize those coveted gifts of this life at their true value, and thus it was that when she heard of her daughter's having bestowed her heart upon Sidney, though greatly astonished, she was not angry or even very much displeased, for she knew his real worth, and at once admitted that could any woman have forgotten his personal appearance his was a character capable of inspiring the sincerest affection.

“ But,” thought Mrs. Fielding, who with all her wise decisions against the power and advantages of beauty was not yet insensible to its charms. “ But how can she love him with such a face and figure ?”

And she gazed at the lovely features of her daughter, and wondered over the deep, deep love he had excited within her heart, the leaning humility of which sentiment struck her forcibly ; for Frances with all

her rare personal beauty, evidently thought Sidney much too good for one like her ; all women think their lovers so, when they are fairly in love with them. And Mrs. Fielding, kind and good as she was, could not take upon herself to crush entirely the affection in which her beautiful daughter's happiness seemed to exist, although she knew that Mr. Fielding would not sanction it under present circumstances, as he was just then trying to bring about a match between Frances, and a very rich, middle-aged friend of his, a Mr. Harvey, whom neither she nor Frances liked.

Mrs. Fielding knew Sidney's position in society was not fixed ; yet she felt with a keen-witted woman's pre-science of the future, that he was one very likely to attain a distinguished footing in society in after life, and in the hope that he might be able at some future time, and under more prosperous circumstances to win her own and Mr. Fielding's unqualified approbation of his suit she did not forbid Frances all hope ; but requested her, nevertheless

instantly to dismiss all thoughts of any regular engagement with him, so that both she and Sidney might remain perfectly free till he was in a position to offer her his hand. In compliance, however, with Frances's tearfully uttered desire, she said, she would permit him to visit the house as a friend ; but not often. And to these arrangements Mrs. Fielding with her usual good sense rigidly adhered, and Frances feeling sure that her own and Sidney Beckford's attachment would last throughout any length of time, quietly acquiesced in them, for she saw their prudence, and knew it would be useless to ask her father's approbation of an engagement with Sidney at the present time. Mrs. Fielding explained to Sidney, when he next came to Brompton, the terms on which she would still consent to receive him at her house ; and he felt well satisfied with them ; they were more favourable than he had hoped to gain from either of the parents of Frances, and he was therefore most conscientiously

scrupulous in not infringing them, or even appearing to do so by calling too often at Fairy Villa. He scarcely ever mentioned to Frances the hopes which now possessed him, for he seldom had the opportunity of speaking to her unobserved, as Mrs. Fielding determined to treat him on all points as a visitor, and never for a moment left them together alone. Yet Sidney seemed happy, and so did Frances, because they were assured of each other's love, and trusted in its continuance. Their eyes and voices spoke the language of their hearts, although their words did not, and they looked forward with hope to the bright future they pictured out for themselves—was it really so bright when it came? Harry Fielding, meanwhile, was not informed of the mutual affection subsisting between his sister and his friend, for Mrs. Fielding who knew Frances did not like jesting upon the subject as Sidney had not any of those brilliant qualifications which some young girls deem essential in a lover,

spared her two or three years' continual torture on that point by affording no ground upon which the rather mischievously inclined Harry could tease her, and Sidney and Frances did not mention the circumstance to him for the same reason.

And Sidney and Frances dreamed away three months of this weary life in a tolerable state of happiness, not seeing one another very often it is true, but thinking of each other much, till an incident happened that separated them for a time, and called Sidney back to his old quarters at D——. It was the following. Dr. Summers was seized with a paralytic fit, and being very slow in recovering from it, he wrote up to London to know whether Mr. Winkelmann could spare him, Sidney Beckford, for a fortnight or three weeks to attend to his practice at D——, he himself being perfectly incapable of doing so : he knew of no one else, he said, on whom he could so well depend, and begged Mr. Winkelmann to endeavour to dispense with the services

of his young assistant for a short time. This his friend resolved to do, as he was not particularly busy just then, and on the very evening he received his friend's letter showed it to Sidney himself, in order that he might answer it on the following morning. Sidney Beckford's countenance assumed an expression of trouble as he listened to Mr. Winkelmann's announcement of his intentions respecting him, and for the moment, he almost seemed upon the point of declining compliance with Dr. Summers' request; but at length, with a strong struggle to conceal some disagreeable feelings that were evidently connected with the proposition made to him, he acquiesced in it. Mr. Winkelmann, however, who just then was in a hurry to set off to keep an appointment he had made with a rather irritable patient, took no notice of his visible dislike to undertake the business in question; and therefore the matter was instantly arranged according to Dr. Summers' wish.

It was in the spring time of the year

when he again set foot in that little village. Nature wore her fairest looks, the fields and meadows were green and fresh, and the young trees were budding gloriously ; the year was in its childhood, and no sear or yellow tint, or leaf, or flower, betokened the sure decay of all the verdant charms it was then clad with ; the rivulets ran sparkling in the sun, the breezes blew chilly, perhaps, but freshly, and every thing was beaming with joy and life—the Spring time of life, the Spring time of Nature are glorious periods—it is a pity they both fade so soon !

“ No time for moralizing ! ” thought Sidney, as he knocked at Dr. Summers’ door, about ten o’clock at night, and some thoughts like those noticed above passed through his mind, while he looked back towards the smiling landscape, through which he had just been journeying ; then glancing down to see whether all his luggage was right, he soon after entered the house, and was ushered into the parlour where Dr. and Mrs. Summers were seated.

They were both very glad to see their visitor, and they made him heartily welcome; the former for the reason that he knew him to be a person whom he could trust professionally and otherwise, and the latter because she thought him a worthy young man, and an agreeable companion.

"You will accompany me to church as usual, Dr. Beckford, I suppose?" asked Mrs. Summers, as Sidney sat down to breakfast with her and her husband, on the Sunday following his arrival, "you will accompany me to church?—that is to say if you are not too tired to do so, in consequence of your sitting up last night with poor old Mr. Laidlaw."

Sidney instantly declared that he was not at all fatigued, professed his readiness to escort her to church, and the lady shortly after retired to arrange her toilette for the occasion. A few minutes more saw them on their way thither.

The village church stood midway between the Park and D—— and it was situated gracefully enough in the midst of soft green

meadows of waving grass, some portions of which were partitioned off from the rest in order to form the churchyard which surrounded it. The inside of the building appeared to be chiefly decorated with the tombs and cenotaphs of the Chillingworths, and two or three other ancient families of the neighbourhood ; but it also possessed a fine window of stained glass, and a good altar piece, so that the first *coup d'œil* was altogether effective. The pews were of dark oak, square in form, and very commodious, especially those belonging to the private families of the environs, and it was in one of these well cushioned and carpeted receptacles that Mrs. Summers and Sidney took their seats on the Sunday we have now occasion to speak of. This pew was situated in the middle aisle of the church, very near the chancel, and immediately faced a larger and better appointed one, in which Sidney perceived the Dowager Marchioness of Chillingworth, and an elegant young girl whom he instantly supposed to be the Lady Florence Lovaine.

Interested, perhaps, by Harry Fielding's romantic narrative concerning the latter, Sidney Beckford glanced towards her ladyship more than once or twice during the earlier part of the service, and this he could easily do without very visibly attracting any one's attention, because when the congregation stood up, the occupants of Mrs. Summers and the Chillingworths' pews were necessarily *vis à vis*.

"Do you see the Lady Florence?" whispered Mrs. Summers to Sidney, as she arranged her hassock anew, during the reading of the marriage bans, "she is not often in church—she dislikes our minister—and generally goes to Netherfield, to hear Mr. Burdon—do you think her beautiful?"

"Rather so," replied Sidney.

"Rather so!" echoed Mrs. Summers, opening her book for the coming anthem, "why she is esteemed the greatest beauty in the county I can assure you—she was even admired at the Queen's ball—she came out last season."

Perhaps Sidney Beckford did not approve the plan of carrying on a series of gossiping observations in church, for he gave Mrs. Summers no answer, and she, taking the hint, did not again make another attempt to begin one.

After the service was ended, however, and while the congregation seemed preparing to depart, Mrs. Summers once more addressed a few observations to Sidney.

“Lady Chillingworth is looking at you, and so is Lady Florence—I declare,” whispered she, “they have recognised you, Mr. Beckford—did you ever speak to her younger Ladyship?”

“No!—at least but once,” returned he, “are the rest of the family down here at present?”

“Dear no!” answered Mrs. Summers, “the Marquis and Marchioness are at the Duke of M ——’s, and as for Lord Ravenshill, Heaven alone knows where he is—generally he is said to be at a hundred dif-

ferent places at once if I may so express myself. He often comes down here though, for flying visits—has done so all the winter—the beauty of a young girl of the name of Cummins attracts him hither; her father is a patient of my husband.”

“He was so when I was last here,” replied Sidney, as Mrs. Summers and he left the pew, and walked down the aisle, “I recollect both the father and daughter very well.”

“Indeed! ah! I dare say,” rejoined Mrs. Summers, “the girl is very beautiful, and charitable enough to the poor people hereabouts; but she most unadvisedly encourages his Lordship to visit her—I myself have seen them talking together at the door of the cottage where she lives with her father and an old woman, who is her aunt I believe. Bad reports are spread throughout the village respecting her—but then, we cannot for a certainty aver that there’s a word of truth in them after all. It’s a wicked world, Dr. Beckford, the world we live in—very—and we ought

to be charitable in the construction we put upon other people's words and actions."

"Particularly when we are just leaving the temple of charity itself," replied Sidney as they stepped out from the church into the neat-looking little church-yard. "There is the object of your animadversions," continued he, a moment afterwards, as he discerned Annie and her father quitting the same building by a side door, "there she is looking as happy and guileless as an angel."

"Ah!" rejoined Mrs. Summers, with a deep sigh, which sounded in Sidney's ears very much like the echo of, "I hope she may continue so!" then soon after she added—"What o'clock is it now, Dr. Beckford? one? oh! it is early yet—I shall have just time to call on the Ullathorne's before lunch, so I will not detain you any longer with me. Do you see those ladies in the pink bonnets? they are the Honourable Misses Meredith of Meredith Hall, and that pale faced gentleman with

them is the rich Mr. Killigrew—good morning.”

And parting company with Sidney, Mrs. Summers turned back towards the church, while he bent his steps towards D——.

That very evening Sidney was sent for in his medical capacity by Mr. Cummins. It was full twilight when he unlatched the garden gate of Brook Cottage to step up to its trellised doorway, and yet faint as was the light glimmering around him, in one of the gravel walks which intersected the flower beds in his vicinity, he distinctly discerned the slight and graceful figure of Annie Cummins. She was then in the act of watering some plants, and at the sound of his footsteps she looked up, and with a smile of recognition, advanced to meet him.

“ My father will be glad to see you, Dr. Beckford,” said she, with the same calm, sweet smile her features generally wore.

And for a moment Sidney glanced at her with a look of pity, as he thought of

the very unpleasant reports industriously circulated to her prejudice in the village. He did not believe one word of them.

“ Shall I show you into the parlour ? ” resumed Annie, and as she spoke the words she led the way into the house, announced him to her father, and then returned to the garden to resume her former occupation.

When Sidney again past through the garden on his return home, at the conclusion of his visit to Mr. Cummins, he perceived Annie still pursuing the same task, and as it appeared to him with increased assiduity, for the sleeves of her neat cotton dress were partially twisted up round the wrists, as if she feared to soil them, and her face was seemingly flushed from the exertion of filling the watering pot she used, as often as she must have necessarily done since the time when he first saw her.

“ This is a troublesome exercise on a warm evening, is it not, Dr. Beckford ? ”

said she, as he approached the spot to wish her good evening, "and to-day the weather is almost sultry, notwithstanding we are only in the beginning of May."

"True ; we have had very dry weather lately," replied Sidney, somewhat confusedly, for in truth he did not exactly know what he answered, as his attention was at that moment partially attracted towards an almost invaluable diamond bracelet clasped round the white arm of the young girl, and which was only half concealed by the turned up sleeve of her dress. Involuntarily, as he thought of Mrs. Summers' uncharitable conjectures, his eyes were directed towards it for a moment longer than they need have been, and he did not immediately relinquish the hand Annie offered him in parting. She noticed this piece of forgetfulness with a slight smile and apparently guessed its cause ; yet she did not seem disconcerted at the discovery of her possessing so valuable an ornament, till the tramp of a horse which

Sidney had heard for some time, suddenly stopped before the gate of the cottage, and in the fading light of evening he perceived Lord Ravenshill advancing towards them ; then, indeed, with a slight expression of sensation upon her countenance, she hastily drew down the sleeve of her dress, and buttoned it round her wrist so as effectually to conceal the bracelet from further observation. Just as she finished doing so, Lord Ravenshill reached her side, and addressed some words of greeting to her.

"You here, my lord," she replied, "I thought you were in London."

"I was so last night, Annie," rejoined his lordship, "now, however, I am again domiciled at the Park."

Then with an expression of impatience he turned to glance at her companion, and at once recognizing Sidney, haughtily moved a step or two backward, till the latter, who had no excuse to stay even for a moment more where he was, left the spot, in order to make the best of his way home, yet as

he did so he could not help overhearing Lord Ravenshill say—

“So, fair nun! others besides myself have the privilege of sometimes assisting you in your floral devotions.”

Sidney Beckford did not hear Annie's answer to this address, but he saw her smile, and speak placidly enough, and his good opinion of her was rather shaken in consequence, because there was certainly decided encouragement in the voice and manner of Annie, when she addressed Lord Ravenshill, or listened to him—encouragement which he knew misplaced on her part, since from the difference of their stations in life, it could lead to no good. The possession of the bracelet, too, argued against her, as it seemed very unlikely that her father could afford to give her so inestimable a gem; and Sidney, though he felt sorry to think so, (for the truly good always wish to judge their fellow creatures as charitably as they can,) was yet obliged to acknowledge within himself, appearances were strongly against her, and that

reports spread about D——, regarding the fair Annie Cummins, might after all be true.

True ? they were wholly false.

CHAPTER IV.

Here ! bring me a smile, a hope, and a fear,
 A pang of pain, and life's bitterest tear,
 A drop of poison that, sweet to the taste,
 Will work forth its deadliness, work with haste ;
 Quietly, quietly—bring ye the cup—
 The lover's elixir—fill ye it up,
 'Tis a powerful potion, as thou shalt find,
 And Love's true dreams it will bring to the mind.

+ + + + *

Do not smiles and hopes form Love's first wild dream?
 Oh ! gently we glide down life's sunny stream,
 Till the second one brings the bitter tear,
 And the pang of pain, and the anguish'd fear,
 Then a thousand pangs do our rent hearts fill,
 While we sigh to retain the first one still.
 Lo ! the poison drop, it is working there,
 Changing smiles and hopes into sorrow and care.
 These, these are the dreams of earthly love,
 Come they from the serpent or the dove ?

Scandal appears to be a never failing
 source of amusement to the idler, and his most
 effectual barrier against *ennui*. It seems to

have a peculiar zest about it which renders it palatable to all persons so that it does not aim at themselves ; it is a theme upon which the fool and the wise man, the polite and the uncouth can talk with equal aptitude ; it is the only subject that never falters into dulness in a London drawing-room, and the only vivifying principle which keeps the flow of news and conversation in a country village from utter stagnation. Each and all of us love to find fault with our neighbour, since by fancying we lower him in our own estimation, or in that of others, we seem to exalt ourselves in the same, and consequently appear to attain a superiority of worth or talent which almost every man wishes to possess.

It is indeed a pleasant and wise proceeding to measure our faults against those of our brother sinner, when we know his will be certainly judged to make the heavier balance of the two, for we thereby necessarily increase our self-respect, and know ourselves to be more virtuous than we before thought we were : humble as we always

are in our own merits, there is no one but that must acknowledge it is as well for us to feel the superiority of virtue over some people, so as not to give ourselves the trouble of becoming better than we need be. It is pleasant, too, to see those whom we deem impeccable open to censure, since it teaches us the frailty of human resolves, tells us to bear with our faults indulgently, and brings the more virtuous friends whom we revered down to a level with ourselves ; an erring being loves not to be surrounded by immaculate ones, whose virtues might put his vices to shame. Now this last sentiment is the very essence of scandal ; we all wish to be above our dearest friends in virtue and talent, or else we wish to place them on an equality with ourselves ; all of us have felt what a comfort it is to find some one more weak, more sinful than we could possibly be, all of us know how grateful it is to the failings, to animadvert upon our friend's feelings, and how generally ready we are to point them out to them or to their ac-

quaintance, in order no doubt that they may attain the excellence in virtue which we have attained. We are generally kind enough to do this, save where our neighbour's sin speaks contamination to ourselves, were we to notice them, and then—why then we plume ourselves upon our virtues, and as charity begins at home, we keep aloof from all suspicion of the like fault, by pointing out to the friends who have no need of our assistance, our abhorrence of it, and charitably warning them against the same—charitably, did I say? Ah! sweet Charity, these are not thy lessons; Heaven-born and never dying one, thou didst never teach us these! It would be strange if that pure spirit of virtue did; one whose name when expressed in words is Scandal, is our preceptress—a preceptress admirably adapted to increase our self conceit, and always near at hand to fill up our leisure moments with useful lessons of censoriousness, particularly in a country village where Idleness sits gaping with ears wide open to receive them, where the kind-

est hearts are sometimes led by the force of custom to lend their mite to the cruellest slanders, and the young, and the old, the men and the women watch their neighbours' most minute actions, with never-sleeping interest, to find out evil in them—for who ever watched to find out good ?

D—— was no exception to this general accusation against all country places ; it had its accredited scandal mongers, listeners, and ready believers, and as it was rather a large place, with about half a dozen respectable families within its precincts, and about two or three dozen in its environs, it contrived to keep up a very tolerably well sustained succession of news during the whole of the year. This being the case, of course, the movements of the new inmates of Brook Cottage, humble though they were, did not long escape the lynx eyes of the persons in question.—D——knew every thing respecting the family that could be known.

It was alleged that Mr. Cummins was a rich miser of the lowest class of society,

for his name had a shockingly plebeian sound, and he invariably wore a threadbare coat with worsted stockings, and heavy shoes. Of his daughter they said she was a little sanctimonious hypocrite, who went piously to church on a Sunday, perhaps as a penance for encouraging Lord Ravenshill's attention to her during the week days. They averred, too, that she had been educated for the stage—perhaps, had really appeared on the boards, since she sang magnificently, and had a sort of quiet ease in her manner and address, which they wilfully mistook for the factitious grace of a tragedy queen ; and a young gentleman from London happening to visit one of the families in the neighbourhood, upon hearing the reports respecting Annie, immediately set the seal to them, by declaring that he had often seen her amongst the choristers of her Majesty's Theatre. But how or why she took up her residence in D—— no one could tell. These, kind reader, were the charitable guesses made regarding Annie Cummins in the highly virtuous village of

D——. She was young, she was pretty, and withal too gently distant to the good people around her to give rise to any kinder surmises respecting her character and deserts.

Meanwhile Annie, utterly unconscious of the scandalous reports respecting her, which were thus freely circulating in the village, continued to live most happily and contentedly with her father and aunt at Brook Cottage, where Lord Ravenshill with singular constancy, and much to the horror of the gossips, continued to visit on the unstable footing of an acquaintance who was merely tolerated by Mr. Cummins and his sister, and liked only by the young girl herself. Never had his lordship been so faithful in following up an affair of the heart or fancy, as in this ; usually he forgot his capricious likings as soon as their novelty wore off ; but in the present case it was not so, and although he only resided at the Park now and then, and weeks and weeks sometimes elapsed without his once seeing her, in consequence of his engage-

ments elsewhere, still he never missed calling at the humble home of Annie Cummins whenever he was in the country.

And Annie seemed pleased at Lord Ravenshill's persevering attentions, yet did not appear to think herself beneath him in rank or education, for her manner evinced a self-respect so determined that it even made his lordship involuntarily pay her a deference which he once imagined he would have never paid to any woman, much less to a child of a retired tradesman as he learned was really the case from her own lips. In her company Lord Ravenshill felt himself obliged to lay aside all his haughtiness, folly, and impertinence ; for he wished to gain her good opinion, and as he saw hers was a strongly reflective mind, which would never give its meed of approbation save where it seemed justly merited, he in those moments practised a sort of unconscious dissimulation of character, that had its origin in his desire of pleasing Annie, and certainly made him appear better than

he actually was. Some men seem to be angels of light till you know them thoroughly.

Yet it was strange Lord Ravenshill should have been so fascinated by Annie Cummins, for he had a great antipathy to sentimentalists, learned ladies, and preaching moralists, and this young girl most assuredly possessed a gentle tincture of learning, a quiet little vein of sentiment, and a slightly puritanical cast of mind.

Excess in sentiment, however, is the easiest thing for a man to forgive in a woman, so his lordship forgave Annie's share of it; learning she taught him to excuse because she never put hers forth ostentatiously; and the pithy little maxims in ethics which dropped every now and then like little pearls from her lips, appeared so much the results of the exercise of her own judgment of the moment upon the subjects before her that Lord Ravenshill, who would have listened rather impatiently to them had they been spoken by any other

woman, bore them complacently enough when proceeding from the quarter they did.

Time passed on ; but Lord Ravenshill's passion for Annie did not pass away ; every day increased its force, and soon he saw that they were no light chains which his wayward fancy had this time forged for itself ; he felt them strong—too strong to break—and knew he loved Annie with a better love than he had yet loved any woman. He perceived, too, that she loved him ; he noticed the quick blush come and go upon her fair cheek when he gazed at or spoke to her ; he saw she evinced the growing affection she bore him, more openly day by day, and something like triumph mingled with Lord Ravenshill's better thoughts, as he felt her utter indifference towards him was at length conquered. When he was fully convinced of this, he hinted the truth of his own affection to Annie—that affection which he yet spoke of as true and generous—


though he knew it could bring no good to her. Annie listened in silence and blushes to these allusions ; she seemed to have no thought of the possibility of anything evil mingling with his love for her ; and still she did not appear elated at the idea of having gained the heart of the high born heir of Chillingworth.

She received his equivocal expressions of attachment coolly and placidly ; she neither sought for, nor repelled them—and she did not seem to imagine they could speak dishonour to her or to him. This behaviour perplexed Lord Ravenshill, and in a degree lessened his respect for her. He was, in truth, surprised that she permitted him to speak his love thus openly, and yet, never seemed troubled at the idea of the difference of their rank. If, as he sometimes thought, she imagined she was in every way worthy to be his bride, notwithstanding her poverty and low-born relations, he, in some displeasure, argued that it betokened a con-

siderable share of vanity on her part ; if, on the contrary, she was merely a calculating coquette, endeavouring to entrap him into a *mésalliance* from interested motives, he felt disposed to hate her ; and again, when he thought the question must naturally have arisen in her mind, as to whether she was certain his intentions towards her were such as she ought to receive—he wondered that a doubt of their truth had not rendered her at times more distant towards him than she had of late been. There was something singular in her behaviour his lordship thought, and it made him secretly esteem her less than he otherwise would have done, notwithstanding that his passion for her increased more and more, till, at length, he was as much in love with her as he well could be.

In love with her ? Even so ; months had elapsed since Lord Ravenshill had first spoken to Annie Cummins ; and having from that time, continually sought her society, he, at length, felt he could not well live without her. His love, founded

partly on her beauty, partly on esteem, was not the pure feeling that a man sometimes entertains towards a woman, and which teaches him not to desecrate her by even linking her very idea with a thought of evil. Utterly selfish—for he did not so much think of her happiness as his own—he wished her to be his—and how? Fraught with the bonds of guilt and sullied in spirit. He did not care for the criminal part of the affair—that could not cast a stain upon his name in after years—and as for hers, what matter if it did? A man when he loves dishonourably, generally settles such matters lightly with his conscience, and pursues his own line of action, but gently burthened with the world's disapprobation, pursues it till tired of his victim he leaves her to a life of shame—in which the love that was once the light of her existence eats corrodingly into her heart and spirit, and sends her in dust and ashes to the grave. Eminently selfish, heartless, and peculiar to man, seems the love that injures irretrievably—and which, after



idolizing a being, his own heart is knit to, wilfully, and for ever blights her after life with a double curse—the curse of her own guilt, and the knowledge that it is owed to one whom she loved—peculiar to man, let that love be, if love it can be called, and God forgive him for it!—he will need forgiveness from earth and heaven, when each pang and tear, and feeling of remorse, that has crushed and broken another's heart, at length weighs heavily on his own—for conscience, though it sometimes sleeps in life, will not so sleep in death—it is immortal ; it follows us to the grave—and beyond it, a sharply reproachful monitor in the bosom of the dying, a still more keenly poignant one in the freed spirit of the dead.

It was on a warm spring evening towards the end of May, when the moon's silver light was shining in the calm, blue heavens, and myriads of stars glistened there, too, that Lord Ravenshill first ventured to speak the evil thoughts he had allowed to gather in his bosom. Annie and he were stand-

ing side by side, near the little gate of the garden, and the former was giving him a flower, which he had asked her to gather for him as a parting gift. She placed the flower in his hand—she turned towards him, and spoke a few insignificant words ; but Lord Ravenshill for once forgetting his usual politeness, did not answer her immediately ; as if in thought he leaned down upon the wooden palisades which enclosed the front of the garden, and gazed forwards to the distant moonlight scenery before him.

“You are thoughtful,” said Annie, enquiringly, and she fixed her large, calm eyes upon his face. “You have been very thoughtful for this last hour.”

“How can I be otherwise when I am with you, Annie ?” replied his lordship, arousing himself to speak.

“I do not see how I can render you thoughtful ?” rejoined she, with another smile.

“You know that I love you, Annie,” said Lord Ravenshill.

"Yes," she answered, rather tremulously, after a moment's pause, and a quick blush mounted to her cheek, "yes ; so you say."

"So I say ?" returned his lordship, "so I feel—do not you believe me ?"

"Yes," she repeated again, "I know you love me—but you have been sadly thoughtful of late—does love for me render you thoughtful, my lord ?"

"Even so," answered Lord Ravenshill, slowly, and he paused between each phrase that he uttered as if he were about to fail in his endeavours to speak the next. "Even so, Annie, because, such as we are, both you and I must love—hopelessly—you love me, Annie ?"

"Ah, yes!" returned she, half whisperingly, and a slight tremor came to her voice, "have I not said so ?"

"Aye, and looked so," rejoined his lordship, with a half smile ; "we love each other equally."

Annie lifted her dark eyes to his face.

"Do you love me so much, then?" asked she.

"Do I not?" replied Lord Ravenshill, "Annie, it is the depth of my passion for you, which renders me miserable."

The young girl paused for a moment ere she answered him; she glanced towards him half mournfully, then a quiet, singular smile passed over her features, and she said,

"Why so? What reasons are there that your love for me should render you unhappy?"

His lordship turned away from the enquiring, yet trusting look of love, expressed within her dark, clear eyes, and answered in a low, constrained voice,

"It would not, if I could do as my own heart prompts me to do, Annie; for then I would make you my bride; and you, dearest, should share with me the scanty honours and riches I possess. But this I

cannot do ; my father would never forgive me if I did —because he wishes me to wed a rich bride, a Miss Childe, one whom I have been partially engaged to since childhood, so that her wealth may arrest the downfall of our house—which rumour and truth say is near at hand. Do not start—do not glance towards me in terror, Annie—I never will—is not my heart only yours ? And yet —and yet—his irrevocable anger would be directed against me did I, during his life time, follow the wishes my love for you teaches me— did I make you my wife—dare I, at present, do so, dearest Annie ?”

“No,” replied the young girl, very quietly ; but Lord Ravenshill saw by the distinct light of the moon that her brow was contracted as it were with pain. “No, we should obey our parents, come what will. Must we part then ?” she added, more hurriedly, and her breath seemed more suddenly and shortly drawn, while her utterance became partially impeded, “must we *never* meet again ?”

“Annie,” answered Lord Ravenshill, and not unwillingly she suffered him to draw her to his side. “Annie, do not say that—I cannot bear it.” And there was a pause, an embarrassed one it seemed on the part of his lordship, and then—“Annie,” he murmured, as the young girl bent her large, soft eyes still trustingly, still lovingly on his countenance, “dearest, in some things you are above the prejudices of your sex, you have views of your own—are nobler, wiser—are there not other links that can bind us together, more truly, more disinterestedly than those which the world deems so indispensable? the links of true, self-sacrificing affection? Come with me, Annie; reign over my heart—make me your slave for ever—you shall be my heart’s idol.”

He made a slight pause of a few seconds in which Annie might have spoken; yet she did not do so. Still leaning on his arm, utterly motionless, perfectly silent, but with her eyes cast downward on the

ground, she appeared to listen to him half dreamingly, and he, seeing that she had as yet testified no displeasure at his words, imagined she demurred over them, listened to his temptings, and he continued—

“Part—must we part? Has not my spirit sought yours? is not my heart knit to yours? has not my every thought and feeling been of late bound up in you? to part will be death to you, death to me. Think of the long dreary morrows that will bring us no hope of seeing each other, when the loved tones of the voice we were once wont to hear will be remembered but as dream-music of the past,—and the future and the past alike must be clothed with woe. Annie, will you doom us both to suffer this? no, no, you cannot, you will not—be mine—let not the paltry censure of the world entammel you with its idle blame; be the bright star of my destiny, my heart’s only dear one! love, Annie, love such as ours will hallow the tie; ever faithful, ever loving through life, it will bear us on to pleasure, joy. Where the spirit

of the beautiful lingers, there will we roam—in the lands of the east we will wander ; those bright eyes now gazing on me shall shine amidst the glories of southern climes, amidst their orange and myrtle bowers, their silver fountains, rippling rivers, moonlight seas ; there others have loved as we will love—happily, enduringly—bound by no ties but those of everlasting affection, only fettered by the heart's own chain. Annie, even now in yonder distance wait fleet steeds to bear us far away—Annie, my own, my beautiful, shall not this glorious life be ours ?”

Still motionless, utterly motionless Annie continued to lean upon Lord Ravenshill's arm the while he spoke ; but gradually she slightly turned her head more directly towards his face, and bent her eyes upon his with an enquiring, wonder-stricken look, then, as he proceeded to unfold his views more eagerly, more clearly, they grew almost stony in their perfect immobility of expression. When his last words died away in the moonlight solitude around

them, that look slowly changed to one of grief, which grew upon her features almost imperceptibly at first, as if her feelings were only gradually awakening from a death-like chill; yet the strength of its expression, though it gathered slowly never slackened in its increase, and at length the actual depth of her emotion was fully manifested in a fixed and dreamy gaze of intense suffering. She did not speak, she did not move, nor did Lord Ravenshill immediately; for surprised by her strange change of countenance which exhibited neither anger, pride, nor even a reluctant assent to his wishes, he hesitated for a moment before he re-urged his suit, that he might aim his words with more effect. Wanderingly at last one of Annie's little hands was raised to her face, while the other still rested in Lord Ravenshill's; passing it over her eyes she seemed to collect her scattered thoughts, and as she did so, she turned her head aside, "Passed, passed!" she murmured, in an almost voice-

less whisper—the dream has passed—ah !
God forgive him !”

And fully herself, she attempted to leave him, with the intention of entering the house, but he yet detained her hand, and she could not. The utter absence of all anger in her words or gestures misled him into a wrong appreciation of the feelings his words created in her mind.

“ We must not part—at least not now,” he said, “ you must promise to see me again—hear me. You are the life of my soul—I cannot live without you. You do not know the maddening passion which possesses me. Annie, have compassion ; give me one sweet word of distant hope.”

The slight struggle with which Annie had tried to disengage her hand from Lord Ravenshill s ceased, as he uttered the last word, and she stood quietly by his side, as she answered him.

“ Hope !” she repeated, half bitterly, and she bent her dark bright eyes towards his face, while the tears gathered slowly

within them, and fell upon her pale cheeks drop by drop, "you ask that I should give you hope? and of what? of my becoming the guilty thing you wish me to be. You would tempt me—injure me—degrade me—is it thus you love? Was it for this you so eagerly sought me? for this you led my heart to centre its whole happiness on you, and seemed all truth and honour, so that when you showed your falseness, and urged me to abandon all I have hitherto held dear, the struggle on my part might be the more cruel—your success more easy? And I love you—and my heart which clung to yours as something nobler than itself must brook this—brook the knowledge that you are false, dishonourable, selfish—guilty before Heaven even now—and would be so on earth were she whom you tempt so idly, as weak as you imagine her. Lord Ravenshill, Lord Ravenshill, loving you as I do, can any earthly trial be more bitter than this?"

And with her last words Annie's calm-

ness passed away, and she wept passionately and bitterly.

"Let me pass," she added, a moment afterwards, "my father waits for me—let me pass."

"Annie," rejoined Lord Ravenshill, not heeding her request, "Annie, you are trembling, weeping—you love me yet! This parting is a bitter one to you even now; and its worst pangs are to come."

"No, no, the worst are past already," murmured she, "since I know you to be all that I ever prayed you might not be; and if I weep, because my life's happiness is rent from me, because I feel that you are not what I thought you were—if I tremble because my heart is sick from the blow it has received, yet, God of Heaven! I do not waver in my abhorrence of what I have listened to. Do not persist in detaining me here—do not let me again hear—that which I shrink from hearing; if you knew how my heart bleeds at every fresh word you utter you would forbear to speak another. Lord Ravenshill, I could almost

kneel to you to implore your silence, for my spirit shivers beneath the truths it is now discerning, my heart is withering as yours is unveiled to its view."

Lord Ravenshill gazed at the pale countenance of the young girl now turned once more towards him with a look of heart-stricken grief; he listened to the words which seemed rather to lament the guilt attached to him more than the insult offered to herself, and something of a better feeling rose within his heart as he did so, while all his doubts respecting the true worth of her character vanished. He was convinced that Annie's love for him was disinterested, knew no selfish passion could have sent that expression of suffering to the pallid face he looked at, and he felt her to be as virtuous as in some past moments of good feeling his own mind had wished her to be; and believing this, his love towards her increased, more honourable feelings gathered in his heart, and crushed the evil ones struggling there.

.

There was a painful look of enquiry upon her countenance as he detained her near him, and answered in a thick troubled voice—

“No, you must not leave me yet—I have misunderstood you, Annie; I thought you were not so purely good as you are; your simplicity of manner led me astray as to your real disposition, and I imagined you encouraged me more than one like you should have done. I speak the truth as the only atonement I can offer you, even though it cast a shadow of blame upon yourself; but now I know you better, I love you better—Annie, I would give worlds to unsay what I have said, to hear one word of forgiveness from your lips; yet I do not ask for the latter—it will be too much for you to give.”

He looked towards her half entreatingly, Annie turned aside her head.

“You thought ill of me? yes, I have encouraged you—perhaps I was wrong in that—in that one thing,” she murmured; “but it could have been repaired—you



ask my forgiveness? you have it—suffer me to leave you now.”

And at length, disengaging her hand, she would have hurried away, had not Lord Ravenshill again stopped her. He had found out during the last half hour that he loved her more deeply than he once thought he did ; he felt the bitterness of parting as they were about to part, and something also whispered him, that if he lost her now, he would lose her for ever.

“ Annie,” he said, in a quick half choked voice, “ Annie, be my wife.”

Suddenly yet tremblingly the young girl glanced towards him as she heard his words ; again within her large dark eyes there gathered tears, and then she turned once more away—the atoning offer of Lord Ravenshill did not meet with her acceptance.

“ Never,” she answered, “ never—that cannot be.”

And in the next moment, Lord Ravenshill found himself alone ; and shortly after

with a feeling of surprise and grief, saw Annie re-enter the cottage.

Beneath the calm blue heavens—before the partially lighted cottage in the distance, he stood for some moments where Annie had left him, thinking over the scene which had just passed between them. Deceived in her character—having found it to be so much better than he thought it was, he now, for the first time, loved her truly and devotedly ; but with the truth of that love there mingled a strong feeling of bitterness.

“She holds me as sunk for ever in her esteem,” he murmured to himself, as the last words of Annie rung through his brain, “she has passed her word that she will not wed me—will she keep it ?”

And his mind dwelt upon the past and future.

He thought of her firm, quiet character—the despairing pain she evinced when his views, respecting herself, were first opened to her, and his heart told him that they

had parted for ever ; yet, when he recollected that she had displayed no thorough contempt—no burning indignation towards him ; his fears slackened—she still might be his, he thought, though somewhat of her esteem was lost, though she had turned from him in abhorrence ; for woman's love, he well knew, was stronger than her anger. She should be his, although his prospects in life, from the pecuniary embarrassments his family experienced, would be sadly altered by so doing ; but what was wealth when compared to Annie's love ?—the influence of which was even now bending his visions of the future upon wiser, better schemes of happiness, than he had yet had.

“Time—time works wonders,” he said, “and against the strong devotion I now feel for her, can she—will she keep her resolution of not wedding me ?”

“Keep it ?” murmured his more worldly feelings—those strange, suspicious feelings that ever and anon settle like blights upon

the heart's purer ones, and which, half unconsciously to Lord Ravenshill, rose within him at present ; " no, no ! her refusal is, perhaps, after all, only a feint to teach you that she is not to be insulted with impunity, to bring you yet more humbly to her feet. Has she so much to pardon ? did not her own behaviour lead you to draw the erroneous conclusions you did ? village girl as she is, she has sense and education enough to make her know that."

And before these whispers, Lord Ravenshill's better current of thought stood still ; he paused—to listen—to believe them. He knew much of the world ; from experience he was accustomed to doubt where doubt almost seemed a sacrilege upon affection or friendship, and he doubted now.

He did not suspect Annie of not loving him ; but he imagined there was some feint of piqued modesty in her last answer, that with time would wear away. Wear away ? if she really loved him,

would it not have been more generous in her, he thought, to have at once accepted him? He imagined he had nobly redeemed his former offence, and did not dream that any woman, in Annie's station of life, could in reality be insensible to the offer of a coronet, coming though it did from a man in whom she had found her trust deceived. And then another startling train of ideas forced themselves on his mind. Perhaps, they suggested, perhaps Annie had long known her power over him—had quickly tested it, and watched for the past *dénouement* of his attentions, feeling certain she could turn the incident to what she liked! perhaps she had even delayed her acceptance of his honourable proposals to make him more humbly feel her value. Lord Ravenshill's pride rose at these suggestions of his own wayward fancy, and his heart, torn by the conflict of feeling they awakened within him, suddenly experienced a strange revulsion of feeling against Annie. The truth of her

anguish, at the discovery of his baseness towards herself, he scarcely credited ; and he tried to believe that it would be better for him to break off from her altogether, love her as he might, since his own pride, and a thousand other considerations were continually inducing him to marry a wealthy heiress, and not one, save the strength of his affection, could persuade him to wed with her.

He tried to feel this, and for that purpose did not go to the cottage for several days. He thought he should mortify Annie's self-consequence, and satisfy his own pride by so doing ; but he soon found that he had prepared an irretrievable wound for his own heart ; for when, after a week's absence from her, he felt that he but uselessly endeavoured to forget her, and went to the cottage to make her listen to him more patiently, he saw the little building closed up, and was informed that Dame Henrichs and her guests had left the place together, and gone no one knew where.

Then, from a waywardness of character, peculiar to a man when in love, with the bitterness of knowing that he had most likely lost her for ever, Lord Ravenshill's love for Annie returned in full force.

CHAPTER V.

My very mother—
Look'd freezingly on me.

Ion.

You'll find a difference
Between the promise of his earlier years
And these he masters now.

Henry V.

"DR. BECKFORD," said the Dowager Marchioness of Chillingworth, one evening, to Sidney, when, after having gone through a tedious call at the Park, he was preparing to depart. "Dr. Beckford," said she, as she finished a long list of ailments that

the young Doctor certainly thought more fanciful than real, "from the remarks which you sometimes let fall, I should fancy you a connoisseur in pictures—now, will you oblige me by giving me your opinion upon one—that is worth the trouble of looking at, I assure you."

"You rate my pretensions too high—I certainly love the art—but your ladyship gives me credit for more knowledge in such matters than I possess," replied Sidney.

"Nevertheless," rejoined the Dowager, with a frigid dignity of manner that made Sidney instantly acquiesce in her request, for fear she should be offended by his non-compliance, "Nevertheless I really wish for your opinion about the picture in question, you must then oblige me by sparing some moments of your present time to examine it."

And intimating to Sidney that he should follow her, which he accordingly felt constrained to do, the Dowager left the room they were sitting in, and hastily passed through several contiguous apartments darkened at

that time with the shades of twilight. In a few minutes her ladyship stopped, and turning the lock of a door exactly before her, suddenly entered a brilliantly lighted apartment, while Sidney, blinded by the blaze of light which, at the same moment, flashed upon him, mechanically followed her into its very centre, ere he precisely knew what he did. When, however, he, at last, looked round him, he was surprised to find himself in the midst of a group of persons, that he instantly perceived to consist of Lady Chillingworth, Lady Florence, and a gentleman, whom he supposed to be the Marquis. They were seated at a little distance from the spot where he stood, and Sidney, after glancing at them, for a few moments, in utter bewilderment, turned to look enquiringly at the Dowager. For a minute or two, no one spoke ; but, at length, her Dowager Ladyship smiled, the cold stateliness of her previous manner was forgotten, and fixing her dark, grey eyes on Sidney's face, and said—

“The picture, Dr. Beckford—do you not

recognise it? surely, in old times, you must have often gazed upon the group before you. 'Tis a quiet, family circle. But there is one who has been a long time missing from it—think you he will soon return?"

Sidney moved impulsively from her, and his cheek became as white as the whitest marble; he saw the Marquis and the Marchioness look towards him with wondering curiosity, and, as if to avoid their searching glances, unconsciously to himself, he covered his eyes with his hand: the Dowager, meanwhile, stood watching him with the same steadfast look.

"You would conceal it still, then?" said she; "deny it yet? even here? Surely the ties of affection, of home, ought to be too strong to allow you to do that—Horace Lovaine, yours has been a hard penance for a child's act of folly; but it is ended now."

"Brother," said the soft, sweet voice of the Lady Florence, and her dark, blue eyes glanced kindly and pityingly into his, as

she approached his side—"brother, I know you are our old Horace—grand-mama has told me all."

"No, no, you mistake, you are wrong," answered Sidney, in thick, faltering accents, "I do not comprehend you—I do not know—for God's sake, let me quit this place."

And he turned his eyes away from Florence, and her Dowager Ladyship, and, in doing so, accidentally bent them on the figures of Lady Chillingworth and the Marquis—both of whom had risen from their seats, and were gazing at him in speechless surprise.

"He is your son, Philip," said the Dowager, as Lord Chillingworth glanced towards Sidney.

"Horace!" exclaimed his lordship, in astonishment, and an expression of displeasure and shame passed over his features, and those of his wife.

"Yes, your son Horace," repeated her Dowager Ladyship more distinctly. "I have watched him for months, Philip, and

know every circumstance that has happened to him since the time he left us. He is Horace Lovaine—look at him yourself.”

And Sidney Beckford’s countenance became flushed and troubled, for the moment, then blanched to absolute whiteness again. He did not utter one word—he did not move—his eyes were now as earnestly bent upon the Marquis as were the latter’s upon him, and, unknowingly to himself, he laid his hand upon the slight and beautiful arm of Lady Florence, who stood near him, as if her frail support could succour him against the weakness which the strength of his mental emotion, at that moment, made him feel.

“It cannot be,” said Lord Chillingworth, in a strongly, agitated voice, “whoever you may be, sir, relieve our anxiety by denying this charge. There are some points of resemblance between you and the poor boy we lost years ago, yet, in others, you differ ; though it is improbable—though it is im-

possible that you can be Horace, still give us your denial to satisfy us at once."

But no denial came from the lips of Sidney Beckford ; and the Marquis, whose eyes had never moved from the former's countenance, changed colour, when he, after a vain attempt to speak, remained silent.

"How can you doubt his being Horace ?" returned the Dowager ; "does not his very emotion betray him ?"

"Dear brother," said Florence, and she passed her arm through his ; "why, oh, why do you refuse to tell us so ?"

"He does not," replied the Dowager, bitterly ; and she looked at the agitated yet scarcely pleased countenances of Lord and Lady Chillingworth. "He does not ; but he sees no one ready to acknowledge him. Surely, after the lapse of so many years, his fault may be forgiven, if fault it was."

"Horace," said Lady Florence, as, glancing upwards to his face, she saw the tears

suffusing his eyes, "I can no longer doubt you, I feel you are my brother, and mama and papa will soon see it, too."

She drew nearer to him, bent down, and kissed the hand that rested on her arm, and Sidney, as if unable to restrain his feelings any longer, for a moment, turned towards her, and clasped her to his heart; in the next, he looked towards the Marquis, then, struggling to attain some composure of manner, said—

"Father, for the love of Heaven, forgive the past—I have erred, and I have suffered—I have no excuse to offer—I make none. I know that I cast away your protection idly and wantonly; fled from it in a child's hasty passion and I have felt my fault long, long since; but when I would have come back and acknowledged it, I dared not. Protected by Heaven, though not deserving Its protection, I worked, hoping one day to ask your forgiveness—gain your esteem—your love."

Lord Chillingworth stood motionless be-

fore his son, listening to his voice, the very tones of which seemed to plead so earnestly yet desparingly for forgiveness, comparing the intelligent-looking, and though deformed, yet gentlemanly young man before him, with the plain, listless boy of by-gone years, and he felt something like a throb of parental tenderness as he did so. But Horace's last words, though not intentionally uttered, seemed like a reproach thrust back upon his lordship, for he interpreted them as alluding to the past dislike that he and Lady Chillingworth had entertained towards him, which forced the self-willed boy to wander from his home; and the proud and haughty nature of the Marquis did not patiently brook the blame his son thus unwittingly threw upon him. True, the flight and supposed death of his eldest child had long been a source of self-reproach to his conscience, though he had never thought with much tenderness of him; but now that he knew he was alive, and in no very pitiable

condition, the pain he had suffered in consequence of his loss, vanished, and the aversion of past years rose harshly in his mind. There was nothing very prepossessing in the first appearance of Horace to deprecate his father's anger, and he answered him coldly and quietly.

"You have no excuse to offer for the past," he said, "it is well ; excuses would be idle when called upon to support an act of disobedience such as yours was—continued too as it has been down to the present time. But let the past be buried in oblivion ; I am willing to forget it."

And was this all the father said to his long lost child ? to him whom his past dislike had so deeply wounded, who must have passed through so many bitter trials ere he stood before him as he now stood. Even so ! Lord Chillingworth looked towards his son, and gazing upon the intellectual expression of his features, felt he was capable of rightly appreciating his past indifference and aversion towards him as faulty, and that he had so appreciated it.

He knew the boy's and the man's sense of justice must have both concurred in resenting his conduct, else Horace would never have condemned himself to the secrecy he had so long preserved regarding his birth, which he even now seemed reluctantly to avow, and knowing this, the Marquis loved not the son whose actions, and whose heart thus reproached him.

Horace Lovaine glanced towards his father as the latter spoke, watched every movement of the lips, every glance of the eye, and felt to its very fullest extent the coldness of his reception. But keenly as the words of Lord Chillingworth wounded him, yet he said nothing; he seemed to have expected no other greeting, and still standing by the side of his sister he bent his eyes downwards upon the floor in painful confusion. A few minutes passed away in silence, and then he again looked up and saw the Marquis and the Dowager leave the room together. He glanced after them with a look of bitter grief, and Lady Florence who was watching him, answered

the thoughts which she saw were passing through his mind with kind, consoling words.

"They are only going to see Mrs. Watson, your old nurse, Horace," she said, "Mrs. Watson was the chief instrument we used in ascertaining your identity ; they will be back soon."

"Soon?" echoed Horace, as turning half unconsciously from her, he leaned dreamingly over a table near him. "Soon?" His eyes were fixed upon Lady Chillingworth, who sat at a short distance from him and his sister, with her face partially hidden in the folds of a handkerchief which she held against it. She had not spoken yet, she had scarcely moved since her first astonishment ; silent and motionless she remained as if entirely absorbed in grief. More minutes passed—neither the marchioness nor her son stirred ; and the Lady Florence stood pale and motionless where her brother had left her, eagerly and anxiously glancing from one to the other. At length Horace rose, approached

Lady Chillingworth's chair, for a moment stood trembling beside her, and then perceiving that she did not notice him—

"Mother," he said, "will you not speak to me?"

A half stifled sob broke from the lips of the marchioness, but no immediate answer did she utter, till her son, as if to attract her attention, bent down and kissed one of her hands as it lay listlessly by her side, then hastily starting from her seat, she glanced towards him with a look of mingled aversion and grief—

"Arthur, my poor Arthur, what will become of him?" she exclaimed, while a fresh burst of tears swept down over her cheeks, "this, this will ruin him!"

And hurriedly withdrawing her hand from Horace's, she turned away; and quitted the room.

Horace stood upon the spot where Lady Chillingworth left him perfectly motionless, save that a slight tremor seemed to pass over his frame; a sudden shock given him by the cruel repulse of his mother

appeared to deaden every feeling within his heart; yet after a time he stepped back towards the table, sat down on a chair near it, and leaned back as if in quiet thought. So entirely indeed was he engrossed by his own bitter musings that he did not even seem to remark Lady Florence who had seated herself on a low ottoman at his side, till her little hand touched his, and she said with some anxiety—

“Horace, do not be so—so still—do not think so deeply.”

He looked down at her fair, kind face, and a faint smile for the moment dawned over his own—a smile which seemed to convey to her mind his comprehension of the half fear her words expressed, then bending forwards, he laid his hand upon her shoulder, and said,

“Florence, when you were very young, too young, perhaps, to remember all that happened there as I do, years ago—at Brighton—you were the only one who ever

looked and spoke to me as—as you do now.”

The young girl understood his meaning; she understood he felt that no one within the home of his childhood loved or forgave him save herself, and she answered sadly—

“They are angry now, Horace,—it will be otherwise to-morrow.”

“No,” replied Horace, half bitterly, “never, Florence—and Arthur, Arthur—would to Heaven I could change places with him!”

And rising impatiently from his seat he stood for some moments in silence.

“He will think,” at length said he, speaking more to himself than to his sister, “he will think this has been done in anger—in revenge; he never will believe the real truth, for he is hasty, passionate, incredulous—he will be against me too. Sister, was it you who thus planned to have me acknowledged? Better

would it have been to have left me what I was."

"Grandmama did it all," answered Florence, half sorrowfully, "she said she felt certain of your identity from the first moment she saw you at D——. Your agitation at the sight of mama, during the incident which happened there, flashed conviction on her mind that you were yourself, and she followed up her suspicions by inviting you hither under the most frivolous pretences, and by patiently gathering from your conversation some hints respecting your past history."

"I was guarded, I was circumspect," said Horace.

"Not always," answered Lady Florence, "your knowledge of the county, of the different gentlemen's seats which she ingeniously led you to discourse upon, and several other little things served as clues to your discovery. When you returned to town she questioned Dr. Summers as to where you resided, and by the means of Mrs. Watson, your old nurse, whom she

directed to become acquainted with you through the medium of the surgery, and who by dint of exertion got intimate with the servants of the gentleman you were living with, she became informed of all the past vicissitudes of your fortunes—even to the fact of the discovery of the rudiments of education which Mr. Winkelmann perceived you had had; she also knew of your service at sea. Before you paid this second visit to D——, grandmama was apprised of it, for Mrs. Watson prevailed on Mr. Winkelmann's house-keeper to tell her all she knew respecting you by alledging that she imagined you to be a nephew of hers whom she was endeavouring to trace out. She never, however, mentioned this last inducement for Mrs. Dinglewell to give her all the knowledge she wanted, till you had safely left town, because she feared that she would tell you or Mr. Winkelmann of her enquiries, and thus put you on your guard against our designs. And Mrs. Dinglewell told her everything she knew even to the names of the brother and

sister you used to speak of when a boy. Mrs. Watson was as eager as grandmama and I could be in prosecuting this enquiry, for she never forgave herself repeating those unkind words of mama, which we have since supposed made you leave us."

"And why did you not inform my father and mother of your surmises regarding me until this moment?" asked Horace, "they were cruelly surprised in recognising me."

"We did not wish to awake their anxiety, till perfectly convinced you were one of us, Horace; besides it was only last evening that grandmama received the last packet from Mrs. Watson, only this evening that she knew you were about to quit D—— so suddenly on Wednesday."

"I knew it was dangerous to visit this place," said Horace, bitterly, "and yet I could not avoid doing so."

"Do not regret having done so," rejoined Lady Florence, kindly, "papa and

mama do not know you to be as good and as clever as grandmama and I do—all will be well yet."

"Never," returned Horace, and the same heart-broken smile that had but a short while since passed over his features, came back to them again, "Florence, sister, you are the only one who has welcomed me hither without a reproach—or will do so."

"And Arthur," said her Ladyship, bending down her head, while a sudden blush of doubt, as to the truth of her assertion' passed over her features, "Arthur will too."

"Arthur!" repeated Horace, and an expression of pain grew upon his countenance, "he cannot like me, Florence, he whom I must deprive of what he deems his rights—and he, and he—"

"Is here," cried Lady Florence, starting up from her seat, and with a shade of fear upon her beautiful face—of fear lest the feelings of Horace should be hurt by some harsh word or look from the *ci-devant* Lord

Ravenshill, she drew near to him, and gazed earnestly, half entreatingly towards the latter who was advancing into the room. She did not know of the past meeting between her brothers, she never dreamed there was a deeper source of enmity between them than that which present circumstances conjured up.

Lord Ravenshill, or now more properly speaking Lord Arthur Lovaine, had evidently heard the news, for his features were pale, and an expression of fixed composure sat upon them, as he entered the apartment, and directed his steps up to the very spot where his brother stood. Both Horace and Lady Florence waited in considerable embarrassment for him to speak; this, however, he did not immediately do; but stood for some minutes in utter silence, his features meanwhile assuming a strangely sarcastic look that fluctuated between a smile and a sneer.

“I have to congratulate you on this for-

tunate discovery, my lord," at length he said, in a calm, bitter tone ; "after so many years of self-denial, the unforeseen event must be doubly welcome to you—to us all!"

The dark, soft eyes of Horace bent themselves enquiringly upon his brother's face for a moment, then dropped to the ground beneath his haughty look, and a deep blush spread over his features. He felt almost guilty of some crime as he stood before Arthur, and knew that his sudden return to the home of his forefathers had deprived the former of the titles and honors he had so long borne as his own—and he answered him by echoing in a thick, hesitating voice,

"All?"

"Do you doubt it?" returned the other and a look of yet deeper irony passed over his fine countenance. "Is there any one in this family who can regret so propitious an event?"

"Arthur," rejoined Lord Ravenshill, al-

most humbly, and the whiteness of his cheek betrayed a far stronger emotion than his words or voice could do, "you have a right to doubt me ; I feel what you must think—yet suspend your judgment till you know—"

"The self abnegation—the forgiving spirit of the individual before me," interrupted Lord Arthur, more bitterly ; "be it so, brother, I will suspend it till I know him as he is."

"And that will be good and kind," said Lady Florence, who had listened in some surprise to the foregoing discourse, and felt that Arthur's resentment was roused against Lord Ravenshill, "good and kind."

"Pshaw, Florence," returned he impatiently ; "you speak of you know not what—we have met before."

"And cannot you forget that meeting ?" said Horace, still gazing downwards on the floor.

"Have you forgotten it ?" replied he ;
"I hold no pretensions to saintship, nor do

you, I fancy ; all I know and feel upon the subject is this : that he, who from his childhood perhaps, has treasured up a plan of revenge, and made the one by whom he fancied himself injured the puppet-king of an hour, to render him a mark for fools to gaze at, when the long conceived project of retaliation is, at length, thoroughly executed, he, I say, who has done this, need not be astonished that his heart, by his actions, is interpreted aright."

A quick blush passed over Lord Ravenshill's face as his brother spoke ; and he rejoined with a strong effort at self-composure,

"And you think this of me?"

"Even so ; how can I do otherwise ?" rejoined Arthur, calmly.

"You think," continued Horace, more slowly, and he steadily fixed his eyes upon his brother's face ; "you think the discovery of to-night a pre-concerted thing—pre-concerted through a desire of retaliation for a supposed injury ; these are your

thoughts, Arthur—speak them at once—speak them openly.”

“Have I failed to do so?” returned he, “my words must have been singularly and unwittingly at variance with my thoughts if I have.”

“Not now, at least,” answered Horace, in a half suppressed voice, and he seemed to turn away from the sight of his brother in utter pain, “this is the last blow, and the worst.”

“The worst?” echoed Lord Arthur, with a sharp, contemptuous laugh; “at all events, it is but a slight one then; the propitious future will soon soften that pang of wounded affection, my lord.”

And turning from his brother, as if he feared the cool bitterness of his passion would rise to a more turbulent feeling, Lord Arthur left the room at the moment when a servant man entered it. This domestic seemed to know nothing of the discovery which had taken place in the family during the last hour, and approaching Lord

Ravenshill he informed him there **was** a man below who wished to speak with him. The latter instantly guessed he was some emissary of Dr. Summers, and roused himself to ask where he was, and where he could see him.

“He is below, sir,” said the servant, still addressing Horace as Dr. Beckford, and following the footman down into the hall, a countryman at once came up and requested his services for his wife, who lay very ill at D——.

“What does he want with you? Are you going away again? Do not go, Horace,” said Florence, earnestly—she had followed him down-stairs unperceived—“do not leave the house, now, or papa may say and do a thousand things that will distress you.”

“I must,” rejoined Lord Ravenshill, quietly; “there is no choice in a case like this; Dr. Summers is not able to attend it, yet, I ought to see my father before I go,”

added he, in a moment afterwards, "where is he?"

"To tell him that you will leave us?" answered Florence, in actual fear.

"It is a case of life and death," said he, in reply. "Where is Lord Chillingworth?" asked he, turning to the footman who, astonished at the above colloquy between the brother and sister, stood gazing at them in undisguised amazement.

"In the library—here, sir," answered he, after a moment's hesitation, opening the door of that apartment and ushering Horace into the presence of the Marquis and the Dowager.

And in a few words he hurriedly explained the necessity there was for his quitting them for a short time. The Marquis seemed displeased at the idea of his services being thus absolutely required, but when he mentioned his engagements with Dr. Summers, he offered no objections to his departure, though he gave his assent to it coldly enough.

hill took it eagerly—it was the first sign of half forgiveness he had yet received from either of his parents—how poor a one it was !

A quarter of an hour afterwards Lord Ravenshill was on his way back to D——, his thoughts wholly engrossed with the bitterness of the grief that had been newly awakened within him, and which alike weighed down his spirit and his heart.

CHAPTER VI.

Thou must live

To change bright dreams for dark ones—live to be
Content to grasp the flower with the thorn.

If the father, who received his newly found son so unkindly, had only known the thoughts that possessed the latter's mind, during the long course of years in which he was separated from his family, cold and stern as he was, he would have forgiven him that hastily executed flight ; for though, in general harsh and severe, Lord Chillingworth was not altogether an unfeeling man. But blinded through pre-

judice, he deemed Horace weak and passionate ; he imagined it was fear and resentment that forced him to leave his home, and kept him from returning to it. He felt convinced he had been dreaded and unloved by Horace in his childhood—he thought he was so now, and he turned from the child whom he had certainly slighted in a spirit of haughty anger, which effectually precluded him from taking any pains to examine whether the opinions he thus assumed were really true. Horace Lovaine had been misunderstood in his boyhood—he was doomed to be so still, and the thoughts and feelings which might have earned the affection he coveted, lived yet unknown and unguessed at in his breast.

Strong indeed, at times, had been the struggle of conflicting thoughts and feelings within Lord Ravenshill's mind ; during the days of his childhood, deeply wounded by the dislike his parents had evinced towards him, one idea alone possessed it, and that was

the half indignant, half humble resolution of never again seeing them, of leaving all the riches which, boy as he was, he knew were his own, to the brother whom they loved. It was a generous idea, but it was an erring one, for by doing so he rejected the authority of his natural protectors, fled from the position which Providence had assigned him, and which it was his duty to remain in, unless a better feeling than angry pride or wounded affection forced him to quit it. Helpless and unprovided, without the means of subsistence, he threw himself upon the wide world, abandoned every advantage that Heaven had given him for becoming better and wiser than he then was, deemed as worthless the rank and honours which he might have employed for the purest purposes, and cast a direct judgment against the unkindness of his parents, whose faults it was his duty to conceal. But the boy did not consider this, he was too young to do so—the man may reason, the child only feels,—and wounded in his love and in his pride, Ho-

race fled from the home of his youth, in a moment of passion, and afterwards, when want and sickness made him sigh to return to it, terror at the thoughts of the redoubled unkindness that he imagined would be shown him, and the shame of pride which is sometimes seen as powerful in the boy as in the man, prevented him from doing so. He did not even dare name who he really was to his only protector, Mr. Winkelmann, since he well knew that gentleman's strict sense of justice would have instantly compelled him to inform his friends of his existence. Time flew on ; the boy grew into the youth, and as his mind expanded he felt what he had done ; he wished for a reconciliation with his parents, but he dreaded to ask for it, and between the many conflicts which disturbed him, his earlier years passed away, and he felt himself upon the verge of manhood—what thought and felt he then ? Calmly and resolutely he condemned himself to the life he had so hastily chosen, he felt the time was past for a reconciliation, he was

convinced his parents did not regret him, and that as their whole affection was centred in Arthur, so would they feel any change in the latter's prospects, more deeply than the actual knowledge of his own death, and strict even to the uttermost upon himself, he imagined that as he had voluntarily abandoned the rights of primogeniture, he ought not to reassume them after so many years had settled his younger brother's claim upon them. Horace strove then to be content with the hopes of rising in the profession he had embraced, of gaining its highest distinctions ; he lived for others and not for himself, he shut his heart against any pity for his own weakness, though it opened in pure compassion to those of his fellow creatures : so he lived, so he thought, even after his first visit to D——; but when the knowledge of Frances Fielding's love for him came like a bright ray of light, and pencilled out the fair view of a happier future, then the quiet resignation with which he had borne his lot, changed to the restlessness of a mind strug-

gling with the temptation of acknowledging who he was and of raising the woman he loved to his actual but long since relinquished rank in society.

Ask any man who truly loves, ask any woman, if they do not wish to raise the object on whom their affections are placed, to happiness and honour, to repay over and above the love which they reciprocate, and they will surely answer in the affirmative. Horace wished to do so.—wished to see Frances elevated to the station in life which he knew he could give her if he chose, though at the same time he felt no riches, no affection could ever repay a love like hers. Yet the idea dwelt within his mind, there were moments when it was listened to, and being listened to, awoke within him the bitter struggle above described. But it was mastered at length; fear that his parents would continue to treat him as unkindly as they had done, a dread lest they should humble the heart of Frances in the same way, a tenderness for the brother whom, though he could not entirely respect,

ried to his own room to escape their conversation, and perhaps their scrutiny.

The next day he explained to Dr. Summers that, in consequence of the receipt of some particular intelligence, he should be obliged to quit him a day earlier than he intended to do, and the latter instantly perceiving, by his manner and words, that there was a pressing necessity for his departure—did not object to it. On the evening, however, of the second day from the discovery of Horace's real character, the motive for his doing so was explained. The post came in about an hour before Lord Ravenshill left D—— for the Park, and Dr. Summers received a letter from Mr. Winkelmann, which contained an account of the change in the circumstances of his guest, as related by Horace himself upon his acknowledgment by his family in a letter he had written to his benefactor two days previous, for the purpose of excusing himself from returning to the Strand. Mr. Winkelmann had also written

to his old protégé by the same post ; but imagining that he had quitted the doctor's house, he had directed it to the Park, and there it was, in consequence, conveyed.

Dr. Summers perused his friend's epistle with a cynical smile, and then opening the door of the study, in which he sat, called his wife into the room, and bade her read it too. The lady obediently commenced doing so ; but after glancing over the few first lines, she let the letter drop, and exclaimed, with a half shriek of horror,

“ Good Heavens ! it cannot be, Richard—gracious—gracious—and I was abusing his mother as hard as I could, only the other day ! goodness me ! what shall I do ? ”

“ Do ? ” returned the doctor, laughing at his wife's distress, “ why, let by-gones be by-gones, and teach your tongue to keep quieter for the future.”

“ Quieter, indeed ! ” ejaculated Mrs.

Summers, angrily, "it was always quiet enough—as quiet as your own, Dr. Summers—have you not censured the Chillingworths to this Dr. Beck—Lord Ravenshill's face just as much as I did?"

"Well, well—as you like," rejoined the doctor, half rising from his chair, as Lord Ravenshill, who had been out on some errand, returned to the house to bid his host good-bye, and entered the study at the very moment Mrs. Summers was uttering her last words. "Cannot you be silent now, Prissy? don't you see he is here?"

The perplexed countenances of the doctor and his wife—the words he overheard as he entered the room, convinced Lord Ravenshill that the truth was known, and quietly advancing towards the former, he succinctly explained his real position to him.

"I know—I know—I have had a letter from Winkelmann, in which he has related everything," rejoined Dr. Summers. "All

the plot—I mean occurrence—discovery about yourself, Beckford—that is, my Lord, he explained—well, it is no use talking, I was never more astonished in all my life !”

And here the doctor threw himself back in his chair, and stammered away to perfection, while his wife eyed Lord Ravenshill with wondering curiosity, as if she expected that his personal appearance had changed as well as his name.

“I should wish to quit you directly, sir,” at length said Lord Ravenshill, “have you any further occasion for my services before I do so ?”

“My dear Lord, no,” returned Dr. Summers, “go to your father—I beg your pardon—Lord Chillingworth, directly—why did you not tell me of this before—why did you not leave us sooner ?”

“There was no necessity for my doing so,” replied Horace, half sadly, as he prepared to bid adieu to the doctor, and Mrs. Summers, “my father knew that I

should not return to the Park before to-night."

"Cool as a cucumber," thought Dr. Summers, as he watched Lord Ravenshill leave the apartment, "he takes the whole affair as calmly as if it were an every day sort of accident—I wonder whether he and his parents care much for each other?"

That night Horace Lovaine re-entered the home of his childhood, and from all but Florence and the Dowager he experienced a second reception within its walls as chilling as his first; there was no welcome back given him by his father or his mother, and his brother, shunned, almost seemed to hate him. The sleep of Lord Ravenshill had, for many years, been broken and restless from mental disquietude—his feelings had oftentimes been wounded to their very quick; but never even in the most trying circumstances of his life, when he pillowed his head upon the cold stones, or slept a broken-hearted

boy in the attic at Mr. Winkelmann's, were his slumbers so disturbed from mental pain as on the night when he first nested beneath the roof of his forefathers.

CHAPTER VII.

I survive to mock the expectation of the world,
To frustrate prophecies.—

Henry IV.

“EH! what! amazement! no, it never can be—talk of a tale of fiction after this—talk of a play—talk of anything you like; but no plot will vie with this reality,” said Mr. Winklemann, as, on the night after the disclosures at the Park, he received the letter from Horace, which has been already mentioned. “Oh! the rascal—oh! the hypocrite—ha! ha! ha! poor child—poor boy—poor fellow! carrying on such a farce, indeed, with that grave face of his!

My God, what he must have felt, though—to exile himself in the way he did from his home—his friends—and so this was all the mystery that ever existed between us—the cause of his terrible quibble of ambiguous words years ago—good, good, I am glad it was so. Will wonders never cease? what will little Fan say? she had discernment enough in picking up a lord instead of a beggar. Hum! he does not write as if he were well pleased. I should like to know what his father said to him? and his mother? There's a capital member of the Royal College of Physicians spoiled—spoiled! not but that's of little consequence—medical men are as plenty as blackberries. So! I have half a mind to step down to the Fieldings' to hear their exclamations upon this affair, eh—no! they are at Brighton—the painting of their house is not finished yet—well, I'll see them as soon as they come home; Fan's astonishment will be worth while looking at.”

And in pursuance of his intentions, Mr.

Winkelmann resolved to visit Brompton directly after the Fieldings returned to town. This happened in about a fortnight after the receipt of the above intelligence, during which time, however, he had received two or three letters from Lord Ravenshill, and one from the Marquis—in the latter, Lord Chillingworth expressed his thanks for his past care of his son, and intimated that he would soon do himself the pleasure of waiting upon him personally.

“A proud man,” thought Mr. Winkelmann, as he placed the letter in his desk, and prepared to step into his little brougham in order to drive to Mrs. Fielding’s, “the wording to be sure is gracious enough ; but there’s a peculiar phraseology about it that demonstrates him a proud man notwithstanding.”

“Fan!” said Mr. Winkelmann, as he entered the drawing-room of Fairy Villa, after shaking hands with Mrs. Fielding, and asking for some tea, “Fan, I have some

news to tell you—news that you will delight in—strange news.”

“I think I know your news, god-papa,” said Frances, with a smile, “it is about Sidney, is it not? I found a letter waiting here for me this morning; Mary was very silly not to forward it to Brighton; but she said she thought we were coming home sooner than we did.”

“A letter from Sidney to you, Fan?” echoed Mr. Winkelmann.

“Yes, god-papa,” replied Frances, with a blush at her carelessness in naming that the source of the information was addressed to herself. “All of us, except Harry, who was in town when the letter was opened, and who has not come home yet, know that Sidney is Lord Chillingworth’s eldest son.”

“Lord *Chillingworth’s* eldest son!” repeated Harry, who at that very moment entered the room, and as he advanced a few steps forwards he became as pale as death, and then remained perfectly silent

and motionless for some seconds, as if spell-stricken.

"Is the Gorgon's head amongst us, Harry?" asked Mr. Winkelmann, in amazement at the effect the communication had produced.

"My dear Harry! well may you be thunder-struck, for I was so too, when I first heard it," said Mrs. Fielding, "it is the most astonishing news I—good Heavens, here he is himself."

And true enough Lord Ravenshill, as Mrs. Fielding spoke, stepped into the room, and with his usual quiet manner, advanced to wish her good evening; but she was too confused at that moment to be able to reply, and Mr. Winkelmann, alone had presence of mind to address him.

"Heartily glad to see you, Sid, or whatever you please to call yourself," said he, "you must pardon the seeming incivility of the company before you, for they have only just been petrified with the news of the day, and are not yet recovered from their astonishment."

This was true ; Mrs. Fielding was so utterly surprised that she could not articulate a word, Harry was thinking of what he now deemed the very awkward confession he had made to Horace, respecting his love for Lady Florence, and Frances though she had been assured of his unalterable love in the letter she had received, still possessed by a thousand inexplicable hopes and fears found herself bewildered into gazing up at Horace with so anxious a look of enquiry, that he, suddenly forgetting there were others besides themselves present in the room, walked up to her, and seizing her hand, lifted it to his lips.

“ Do not doubt me, do not look so troubled,” he said, till seeing Mr. Winkermann and Harry’s eyes fixed upon him in perfect astonishment, he moved with a sudden start towards Mrs. Fielding, and shook hands with her.

Harry’s countenance, meanwhile, would have been well worth studying, for in utter confusion he was thinking what a simpleton

he had made himself by relating his rather romantic love affair with Florence to her own brother, as Sidney Beckford turned out to be, and he was also remarking, in great surprise, the understanding which seemingly existed between him and his sister. He could not comprehend the slightly melo-dramatic scene which was passing before his eyes, nor did Mr. Winkelmann ; and both gentlemen sat down unpleasantly anxious about its interpretation. Harry, however, could not immediately address Lord Ravenshill, but Mr. Winkelmann tried to do so ; and taking upon himself the burthen of the conversation, he sustained it conjointly with Mrs. Fielding, who having recovered from her first astonishment exerted the calm, good sense she so eminently possessed to put the easiest aspect she could upon present affairs. And Mrs. Fielding's endeavours were equal to the emergency, though it must be owned it was rather a trying one, for the idea of her daughter's engagement with Horace weighed heavily on her mind at that time, because she

knew Frances loved him sincerely, and she dreaded lest it should now be broken off. Yet this latter supposition did not in any great degree alter her manners towards Lord Ravenshill ; hope of what might be, could not make her elated or presuming, nor fear meanly deferential ; she was as kind as usual to him, and though there was a slightly perceptible decrease of cordiality in her manner, occasioned by a feeling of pride that forbade her to encroach upon the relation in which she had hitherto stood towards him, yet upon the whole her behaviour was the same as usual. She and Mr. Winkelmann kept up the conversation unceasingly, speaking, however, on indifferent subjects, and never once alluding to the sudden change in Horace Lovaine's prospects, for both of them knew by an innate delicacy of feeling which few people would have had in the like case, that his past history could not but be a painful theme to touch upon.

As for Horace himself, not anyone could perceive the slightest difference in

his demeanour towards his old friends. He paid the same deference as of old, to Mrs. Fielding and Mr. Winkelmann, and spoke in his customary manner to Harry and Frances. He appeared indeed to shrink from mentioning his sudden accession of rank and wealth, and when Mrs. Fielding once or twice addressed him by his title, his brow became slightly contracted, as he turned towards her, and said, "Call me Sidney—Horace, if you like, my dear Mrs. Fielding, but do not let us forget old habits."

"Well, this is wasting one's time sadly, this won't do," said Mr. Winkelmann, suddenly rising in the midst of some trivial conversation, "I have half-a-dozen places to go to. Mrs. Fielding, I must bid you good night. Fan, good bye."

"Are you going to town, sir? can I accompany you?" asked Lord Ravenshill, starting from his seat.

"If you like," rejoined Mr. Winkelmann.

And both gentlemen rose, and wishing the Fieldings adieu, left the house.

That which passed between Mr. Winkelmann and his lordship on their way from Brompton may easily be told in a few words—briefly then let it be related, for long explanations are terribly tedious. The latter at once, and thoroughly satisfied Mr. Winkelmann's curiosity respecting the singular trials of his early years, and even revealed the very thoughts and feelings which had induced him to remain silent upon that subject until now, because he well knew they would be understood by his benefactor, and he felt the confession was due to him in return for the inestimable kindness with which he had treated him. And Mr. Winkelmann, who had studied Lord Ravenshill's disposition with about as much care as a connoisseur would do the merits of a fine picture, found his affection towards him increase, and became exceedingly anxious to know if his parents had forgotten their old aversion towards him, and had forgiven his childish escapade.

But Mr. Winkelmann did not question him upon this subject, for in Lord Ravenshill's conversation he perceived a marked avoidance of his parents' names, which partially led him to guess that his reception into his family had not been a kind or forgiving one, and this idea pressed more weightily on his mind when, as his lordship turned to bid him good night at the door of his former home in the Strand, he said—

“My father will call on you to-morrow, sir, to express his thanks for your kindness to me. He came hither to-day, but you were out, and he went home again.”

These were simple words enough, but the tone in which they were spoken was not as simple as their signification; a thickness in the voice seemed to impede Lord Ravenshill's utterance, and the bright gaslight from a lamp-post opposite Mr. Winkelmann's house distinctly showed a deep crimson flush was passing over his usually pale features, as he strove to articulate them.

“His present mode of life,” thought Mr.

Winkelmann, as he entered his own dining-room, and sat down in idleness by the side of its comfortable looking fire. "His present mode of life is not as agreeable as his past one, I am sure. Are his parents harsh upon him? they must be sound idiots if they are, for you do not often pick up with a character like Sid's in this good-for-nothing world. So his father will call upon me to-morrow? Humph! I wonder what sort of a person he is, and what kind of an interview we shall have—not a comfortable one, I dare say."

And not a comfortable one, indeed, did it prove, for though Lord Chillingworth expressed his thanks for the benefits Mr. Winkelmann had conferred upon his son, as a gentleman and a father should have done, still there was something so peculiarly icy in his manner of mentioning Horace that the latter felt almost instantly at variance with him. He perceived Lord Ravenshill was not appreciated by the Marquis at his true value, he saw that the fault of his youth was visited heavily upon

what you say he owes me—he does not now—he never will. He knows well enough what I think upon that subject, and I know in what light he regards it ; the affection which exists between us is, I hope, above the petty considerations which your lordship imagines it clogged by ; his mind is noble enough to feel, that to force the requital of the debt upon me, is an insult, and, I doubt not, that after a few moments' reflection, you will feel so, too. It was just, in the first place, to offer to reimburse me ; but now that you understand it is a debt too sacred to be cancelled between your son and I, I believe you will have sufficient good feeling not to press the subject farther."

And Lord Chillingworth, notwithstanding all his endeavours to the contrary, was obliged, for the time being, to acquiesce in this determination of Mr. Winkelmann's, for no persuasion, on his part, could shake it, and his lordship, hurt in his haughty pride, which loved to continue under no

great obligation to friend or foe, shortly after left the house, on no very amicable terms with his son's *ci-devant* protector.

A few days subsequent to this interview, Mr. Winkelmann learned, that a sum of money, covering all the possible expenses he could have incurred on Lord Ravenshill's account was paid into his banker's by the Marquis.

The former was a man to be disturbed at this measure on the part of Lord Chillingworth ; and he immediately drew the money out in bank notes, burned them to cinders, and then sent them to his lordship, with the following explanatory lines :—

“The enclosed fragments of burnt paper, are notes which I have destroyed to the full amount of the sum your lordship was pleased to pay into Messrs. D——’s firm the other day. Consider me paid ; justly, I am so, since I have exercised the right you gave me over the money in question. My mind could suggest no other

purpose for which I could consent to receive it from your lordship."

If anything could have increased Lord Chillingworth's growing dislike for Mr. Winkelmann, it was the above intelligence, couched as it was in so independent a strain ; for, haughty in spirit, he ill-brooked the decided rebuke upon his pride that it expressed. The Marquis had never loved his son, he did not love him now, and consequently he felt no slight degree of discomfort when he stood in the presence of the man who had so generously and kindly supplied a father's place to the neglected boy. The foregoing epistle then angered his lordship much, and he used it as a plausible means of shunning an intimacy with Mr. Winkelmann ; he endeavoured to consider that it was intended to convey a direct insult to him ; he accordingly did so, and gradually he entirely relinquished the idea of ever seeing that gentleman again.

But if Mr. Winkelmann was, greatly to his satisfaction, exempted from the visits of the Marquis, he had every month still to bear a ceremonious interview with the latter's wife, who, for the sake of appearances, made it a point to call upon him whenever she was in town, and even went so far as to intimate that she would always condescend to do so. Lady Chillingworth thought the performance of this promise a part of her duty, notwithstanding the difference which existed between the little doctor and her husband; she imagined she thus retrieved her character as a mother, and, therefore, bore with the most exemplary fortitude the ten minutes' visit she bestowed upon the worthy man who had saved her child from misery—perhaps, death.

Nevertheless, Mr. Winkelmann did not feel much honoured by Lady Chillingworth's condescension; he saw through the superficial kindness she expressed for her son, pitied Horace from his very heart, and conceived no small degree of aversion

against his mother. Elegant, beautiful, and fascinating as the latter still was, in his mind, all her attractions were outweighed by the past and present conduct towards his former *protégé*.

He could not esteem her, he cared not for her rank, and would have rarely seen her, but for fear his incivility in that respect might increase the misunderstanding which he felt yet survived between Lord Ravenshill and his parents: Mr. Winkelmann had the rare charity of at times taming down his dislikes, to ensure some advantage to his neighbour, though he would not have so done to benefit himself. He saw Horace continually, and knowing him from a boy, guessed by his very manner the poor comfort he met with at home; and from the moment he saw this, he half regretted the hasty letter he had written to the Marquis, because from his experience in the world's ways, he knew that it might prejudice him against the son whose mind he had formed, and thence forward in some measure to check

an increasing coldness, which he perceived arising between the Chillingworths and himself, he bore her Ladyship's company with the same admirable politeness and patience that she did his. Life is a capital farce after all when the play of its actors is narrowly watched.

Lady Florence and the Dowager, however, were viewed in a different light by Mr. Winkelmann ; they called frequently upon him—old Lady Chillingworth invited him to her house, and though with a sort of sturdy pride inherent in his nature he never availed himself of her kindness, because he had been slighted by her son, he yet spoke of her and of her grand-daughter with delight and admiration, and Lord Ravenshill, heard with pleasure that at the hands of some of his kindred, his old friend and benefactor had met with the consideration he deserved.

CHAPTER X.

A boat sent forth to sail alone,
At midnight on the moonlight sea,
A harp whose master-chord is gone,
A wounded bird which hath but one
Unbroken wing to soar upon
Are such as I am without thee!

Moore.

I did not know till she was lost
How much she was belov'd!

Miss Landon.

At a small, insignificant watering-place on the western shores of England, upon a bright evening towards the end of April, just as the sun was disappearing beneath the distant horizon, a young girl, attired in a grey flannel shawl, and close straw

bonnet, stepped from a mean-looking house that stood near the somewhat rude esplanade, formed upon the summit of a tolerably elevated sand bank, which separated the main road from the beach, and descending through the rushes that covered its sides, at last reached an old boat left on the sands, perhaps, for the convenience of any idle or tired stroller who might wish for a resting-place after a long day's ramble. Here she sat down, and patting the head of a large mastiff which she had brought thither as a companion, bade him remain quietly at her side. The dog appeared to understand his mistress, and, gently crouching, laid his huge head upon her knee, and settled himself for a comfortable dose. Meanwhile the young girl cast up a gauze veil that partially concealed her features, untied her bonnet, and pushing back the smooth glossy braids, which bound her fair temples, leaned forward and gazed upon the scene before her with a quiet thoughtful look. The view on which she thus apparently

bestowed her attention was remarkable for its stillness and beauty ; around and before her a broad belt of yellow sand yet glittering in the fading sunbeams lay encircling a small headland that jutted out into the sea, and swelling up to her very feet, a wide expanse of dark green water rippled with tiny waves, scintillated in some parts like an undulating sheet of gold. Above, the deep blue sky was spotted with bright pink clouds, and near the waning orb of day were seen a few, the vivid hues of which approached almost to crimson ; and there, too, the pure and cloudless azure of the sky assumed a glistening, rosy tint, as if the reflection of a ruby was shining through the radiance of a sapphire. Quietly the pensive eyes of the young girl rested on the ocean ; but her thoughts seemed not to fix themselves upon it. A flitting shade of grief ever and anon passed over her fair, calm countenance, tempered, however, at times, by a look of gentle, yet firm resolution ; for something in her dark eyes as they lingered on the waters before

them bespoke a trial past, sustained, conquered—a spirit that had suffered pain, but had not allowed pain to vanquish it.

“Annie,” suddenly said a voice beside her, and the dog and his mistress started from their repose, and looked hurriedly upwards, “Annie,” continued the voice, and the voice was that of Lord Arthur, “I have found you at last—Who would have thought of your burying yourself in this out of the way place?”

There was a bitter sneer, and a haughty smile upon the countenance of his Lordship as he uttered these words, and Annie, who had instantly recognised him, though not without emotion, glanced hastily at him for a moment or two, then turned to leave the beach. But he quickly guessed her intention, and crossing her path, so as to frustrate it, said in a piqued and troubled voice—

“After having sought you as diligently as I have done, surely you may as well grant me a five minutes’ interview. You

shall not leave the sands till I have done speaking."

Annie Cummins did not seem much angered at this rather insolent speech of his lordship's, and not a word in reply, or even a change of countenance, gave notice that she heard it ; walking on in silence she only endeavoured to pass him and ascend the bank which led on to the esplanade. This, however, she was prevented doing by his hastily overtaking her.

"Annie," he said, with a sudden change of tone and manner ; "your coldness—your pride, will drive me mad. You do not know what has happened—you must listen to me when you know all."

Annie moved on.

"You will leave me?" continued Lord Arthur, and haughtily drawing back a step or two, he measured her with a look of scorn, then added, with a hollow laugh, "Perhaps you are informed of the change in my circumstances—of my brother's being alive? You were acquainted with him, I

now remember ; you knew all, no doubt, even when we last met—and so prudery took the mask of virtue to strike home into the heart of the offender, when—no, no,” subjoined he, hastily, as he gazed upon the calm, truthful expression of her countenance. “Annie, do not heed me—I know not what I am saying—jealousy and love distract me—and yet—and yet, I came here to throw myself on your compassion—came here with humble thoughts enough—do not, by your coldness, turn them to bitter, proud ones—that is not virtue that casts utter contempt on the feelings of a man, however deeply he may have offended you.”

Annie, for a short time, stood still, with an expression of irresolution upon her features; then she looked up, and answered chillingly,

“What would you say to me, Lord Ravenshill? I am listening.”

The calmness of her voice and manner appeared to disconcert his lordship; he

moved two or three steps from her with a gesture of strong impatience—came back again and once more gazed at her placid countenance, as she stood facing the fading light of the sun, whose crimson beams appeared to throw a glow of glory over her whole figure, and bathe her lustrous eyes and hair in aureole light. She seemed like some fair saint, scarcely touched by human passion—human sin—so purely fair was she, and Lord Arthur, as if bowing to the sweet and better influence her gentle presence cast over his mind, addressed her more calmly, although more earnestly, than he had ever yet done.

“I know you have loved me,” he said, “though statue-like as you stand there, one would think your heart as cold as your words. But you have loved me; that love, too, I feel has been as true as earthly love can be—and trusting in its truth, though I have sinned against it, I come to test its strength to urge you once again to a more complete forgiveness.

Surely the doom you last spoke is not irrevocable—Annie, if ever a man loved truly, I do now.”

She glanced up into his face for a moment—a slight flush came to her cheek—and she answered with some difficulty,

“You never understood me—I did not understand you ; I thought you different to what you are—this is a useless interview—my answer is the same as when I last saw you.”

And Annie again endeavoured to retreat from the sea-side, but Lord Arthur still detained her.

“This is womanish, Annie,” said he, “mere prudery ; if you have ever loved me, as I now love you, you would forgive me. You have sufficiently shown your disregard of the worldly advantages I possess over you in your late refusal ; you thought, perhaps, that would not shake your power over my heart—you judged rightly, it did not. You knew me better than I knew myself—for I find that I love you above

all earthly things. You are linked with the brightest dreams of my imagination, with the best feelings of my heart ; do not then lessen my faith in your straightforward simplicity of character by feigning an austerity which, if you love, you cannot feel. Annie, loving me as in past times I know you did love me, you must, and will, forgive what has happened—be my own, and lead me—for you shall lead me—to be wiser, better than I can be without you, Annie, this will be.”

“No—never!” returned she, and her hitherto placid countenance assumed an expression of pain, as, with a considerable effort to speak, she turned towards him, “listen to me for a few seconds, my lord, and then you will understand it cannot come to pass. It is better to explain—to tell you all, so that there may be no further hope on your part of changing my determination. I loved you,” she continued more falteringly—more hurriedly—and a rich crimson glow spread itself over

her cheek and brow ; “ I loved you—I will not say how deeply—I thought you true and good—I found my trust deceived—”

“ Not utterly—not utterly !” interrupted Lord Arthur, “ I misunderstood you ; had I known you as you are, I would never have tempted you as I did.”

“ No,” replied Annie, more hastily, and with a deeper flush on her cheek ; “ you would have only spoken to a weaker girl—tempted where there was less strength of mind to resist temptation—Heaven forgive you ! And is it to one who could do this, that you ask me to give my heart—to swear to love and honour ? My lord, if I had not put faith in your truth—if I had not esteemed you for the good which I imagined dwelt within you, I could have loved you, but with a worthless love—a love that would have deserved a more bitter and more painful death than mine has met with now. Love to endure for long, must, at least, believe in the true faith of the affection it seeks—can I believe in

yours ? Yours which would have betrayed me had I been weak ? Yours, whose every thought and feeling, when directed towards me, was utterly selfish and evil ? You had no mercy on the heart whose best feelings you were about to crush with pain, or direct towards guilt ; calmly, day by day, hour by hour, you waited, watched, and tempted, till, in the strength of the love you had awakened within me, you thought you saw your triumph ; **and then—then** the words were spoken—love crushed—hope blighted—pained endured in the heart that was knit to yours—strongly, purely—the heart which had prayed for your happiness more than for its own—it was a bitter moment—it has passed !”

She bent down her head—turned aside as if to conceal the tears that were trickling down her cheeks, then murmured in a fainter and more suppressed voice,

“ Such as you were I loved you—loved you more than life ; but now—if

love yet lingers within me—it shall be soon—soon conquered.”

There was a short pause, and pre-occupied with the painful thoughts which oppressed her, Annie did not think at that moment of leaving the beach. With her face half covered by her little hand pressed heavily upon it, she stood near Lord Arthur, as if absorbed in grief; while he, bending his eyes upon her partially concealed countenance, over which he could distinctly see the large tears falling, also remained silent and motionless. A strange, wavering sort of expression sat upon his countenance; yet not a trace of pride; the large blue eyes had a fixed and anxious look within them, his brow was slightly contracted, his cheek unusually pale, though but a moment before it had flushed deeply at Annie's words. Suddenly he approached her.

“Love yet lingers with you,” he asked, in a hurried and faltering voice, “Annie, do not utterly crush it, even though you should never speak to me again. You hold me

in contempt? I deserve it; but not to the very full. Many and many a time your innocence turned me from my purpose, many and many a time have I sworn within myself never to see you again. Annie, the world thinks lightly of these things, and I have lived in the world; yet though living in it, its chains have not entirely shackled me, and at times a better feeling come upon me—you have awakened it now. You can make me what you will—guide me to what you will—do not forsake me when all forsake me—fortune, title, friends.”—

“Lord Ravenshill,” said Annie, and she raised her hand with a gesture of entreaty, as if to bid him once more be silent.

“No, not Lord Ravenshill,” he replied, “do not call me by that name—it is no longer mine. A brother, an elder brother of mine, long supposed to be dead, within these three or four weeks has been found to be alive—I am but a younger son now, and as such, I am humbled enough. But,” he continued, “still you may be my wife,

Annie—though fortune has forsaken me she has not left me completely bankrupt. Then be mine ; you alone can save me from the abyss that is opening in my path—an abyss of ill directed pursuits, stormy passions, bitter hatred ; your influence alone can make me shun it ; when my home is yours, peace will dwell there—a holy heart shall purify an erring one—the wife shall save the husband. Annie, be mine ! you, and you alone have wakened all my worthier feelings, taught me to trust in, and to cherish them—will you not ? Would you know the heart I thus offer for your guidance ? It is not wholly bad ; anger is there—hatred towards a brother who has deceived, insulted it ; pride and folly ; but let the smiles of your love dwell within it, and its worst passions will vanish. Do not send me back into the world without one single hope—that will doom me to despair.—I have loved none so much as you. Do I not speak humbly enough ? I know my fault is hard to be forgiven—what humiliation

will suffice to efface its remembrance ?
how shall I plead to earn one hope ?”

And Lord Arthur bent down before the fair being whom his wayward heart now worshipped with increasing love, and gazed up into her exquisite countenance with a passionate look of entreaty and love.

“ Plead ?” echoed Annie, rising hurriedly from her seat half blinded by her tears, “ Oh ! not thus, not thus. Do not kneel to me, Lord Ravenshill, it is useless—weak and frail as I am, I cannot guide you to good ; stand by your own strength and Heaven protect you. I cannot be your wife—not because I do not forgive, for long, long since I have forgiven ; but because this earnestness on your part is only the passion of the moment ; error and habit will soon come back in full force—lately I have heard much of you, and the last dream of your former self has passed away from my mind. Hate ! hate your brother. who has so long borne shame, and disgrace, and pain, did you say ? God forgive you ! I know him, I know every thing respecting him and

you ; believe me he is not what you think him. Lord Ravenshill, is it I who could teach you better things ? If you know what is right, feel what is right, Heaven forgive you if you do not strive to do it. It is God who must teach you. Knowingly to link my fate with yours, while feeling I could neither respect nor honour you, would be guilt in my mind."

Lord Arthur rose from his kneeling posture, rose with a darkening brow, and lightning flash in the bright blue eye, and looked at her with a glance of suspicious astonishment.

"You know all," he said, in a tone of mingled surprise and anger, "yet you left D—— long before that happened. Who told you of it, Annie ? Did he ? You knew him, you knew him—yet how could that be ?"

And he was silent for a moment, and rivetted his eyes upon her with a sudden glance of searching enquiry, till her colour heightened, and she turned away from him

with a look of trouble and confusion. A long minute passed—another, and another, and the brow and cheek of Lord Arthur became each instant more lividly white, while the clear blue of his eye seemed to deepen in its hue, and to sparkle brightly with a flashing increase of light ; his lips, too, quivered for a moment ere he spoke, then in a cold, ironical tone of voice he addressed her.

“Pardon me,” he said, “I entreat your pardon if the question is an embarrassing one ; I forgot that when we last met, you told me you intended to consider all intimacy between us at an end, and that in consequence, you were free to bestow the heart I had hurt so deeply, upon another—even though that other were your last lover’s brother. I read your riddle clearly, most scrupulous Annie ; the long continued visits of the much respected Dr. Beckford were not encouraged without an ulterior end in view.” He paused for a moment, just as a quick bright colour came to Annie’s face, and while he watched it increase, a sharp sneer-

ing smile, hardened down upon the outlines of his, and he continued : " Truly, my pretty puritan, it was great wisdom to have another lover in reserve, in case the first should disappoint you in his tinsel titles or his gold. Yet, fair Annie, it was not to such wisdom, such virtue, that I bent the knee a short while back ; so high a standard of moral excellence is far above my approbation or praise ; the amiable heir of Chillingworth alone can prize it at its worth. Your matrimonial tackle has been well thrown ; for if it first chanced to light upon the painted shadow of its prey, it soon glibly slipped off to the more substantial reality. Such dexterity for intrigue is to be marvelled at and admired, because more likely to be found in the palace than the cottage ; but lo ! the gifts of genius lighten every where—sweet sister, I wish you joy ! "

Her frame trembling with the anger Lord Arthur's words awakened within her, Annie Cummins stood listening in wondering surprise. Over her usually pale face a

crimson blush of vivid hue almost every instant alternately faded and returned ; a bright look of indignation shone within her dark, lustrous eyes ; but as if the strength of her agitation had rendered her speechless, she remained utterly silent for a few minutes. Suddenly she turned towards him, her eyes assumed a quick, flashing, unsteady light, her little hands clasped together as they happened to be, literally shook with emotion, and she was about to speak the burning sense of anger she felt, when, by a strong effort of self-control she staid some words that were trembling on her lips, till the cheeks became death-like in their whiteness, excepting where a small, deep hectic spot on each side seemed scorched into the clear, soft skin, and, as the lines of the features settled into composure, in a quick, hollow voice, she answered him.

“ You have trampled down all good feelings within your own heart,” she said, “ you have outraged those in mine ; you have spoken that which you do not believe

—cannot prove—never will! Shame be on the mind that can think as yours has done, on the tongue that can speak as yours has spoken; let your own heart pass its sentence upon you—Lord Ravenshill, I would have you suffer me to leave the beach.”

Lord Arthur looked at the beautiful and indignant countenance turned towards him, met the full, brilliant eyes that flashed a look of contempt and aversion upon him; and suddenly and deeply he felt what he had done; cursed the vile jealousy he had listened to; and while his heart overflowed with wayward remorse he once more addressed her.

“Call me a fool, Annie, a madman,” he said, “what you will, only do not quit me yet—not while hatred and scorn are dispelling the last trace of kindness in your voice and manner.”

But gathering up her sylph-like figure into an exquisite expression of woman-like dignity, she only reiterated her wish to

leave the sands ; still, however, he detained her.

“ Hear me, for one moment,” he said, eagerly, “ Annie, I do not ask your pardon, I dare not ; yet, in mercy’s sake, feign that you do not hate me, even if you do. Urge not a despairing man to madness ; tell me, at least, that all I said a few moments since, will in years to come be remembered as the wild results of a passion which knew of no control, grew from much evil, and yet in the end proved true ; for on my soul, on my honour, Annie, I love you now as truly as ever man loved. Believe in my love ; I do not ask you to receive it, or to forgive its past excesses, only say you will credit its truth, and that shall soften the utter misery of its future existence, though it may not rouse it from its hopelessness. Say this, Annie—you do not speak—you turn away—have you no pity ? can you not feel for me ? Think that I am deprived of all I once thought mine— of wealth, honour—of you,

who I deemed my anchor against all evil. I know your goodness now, and knowing it, feel what I have lost, and what I have earned. I bartered against innocence and truth—jealously reviled them, and lost the prize I had sought as mine ; lost it when I knew its worth, and would not have sullied its purity ; and, Annie, I have earned your contempt. Is not that punishment enough ? I stand alone upon the brink of a dark gulf ; and one, one whom I worshipped as the light which would securely guide me across its depths, has fled from its overshadowed heaven. Heart and mind alike neglected or misused, tell me I am weak where I should be strong ; hope may whisper that good may be achieved, but the voice of evil also speaks, and it bids me despair. Annie, it is you who have doomed me to listen to it alone, without a guide, a hope, a recompence ; chosen for this trial, every hope of life tracked to death, have you no pity in your woman's heart to give me ? I ask for nothing more."

He looked at her for a moment ; words were quivering on her parted lips ; her complexion blanched each second more and more ; she leaned against the bank near which she stood, and her blue veined eyelids closed over a gush of tears.

"This, this is pain—oh ! far exceeding past pain," he heard her murmur, "he does not know—cannot tell that I would give—save—Lord Ravenshill," she added, more quickly "quit me—I cannot hear you longer—I have loved too well."

"Too well," repeated he, "Annie, say that word again, for it seems to tell me I am yet loved—too well?"

She rose, she stepped a few paces forward on the darkening beach, and long, low sobs passed from between her half closed lips ; she had had her heart wounded, her purest feelings insulted, and indignation had at first kept pace with grief ; but when she heard his latter words, saw the struggle in his wayward spirit, and thought upon the chances of his future life, the clinging yearnings of the woman's love

revived, and her heart throbbed with tenderness. She turned and looked at him fixedly for some minutes with that pale face of hers, till a bright, earnest look gathered upon it ; her dark searching eyes gazed into the depths of his, the tears dried upon her cheeks, and no fresh tears fell, and sunlike in its radiant beauty did her countenance become as she thus stood, for secret hope relit the torch of love within her heart. The woman hopes where hope seems vain, she strives where strife appears useless, and amidst a darkness that, to man, would appear impenetrable, she will unerringly approach the shrine he fails to find, and kindle the sacred fire his less sure touch would extinguish. Never yet has the eye of man read the language of his own heart as correctly as woman has done, when written in the characters of that knowledge her own mind is familiar with, and if in some of the loftier aspirations of his nature, she fails to understand or to act rightly upon them, it is because her mind has been unwisely narrowed, her

vision limited by the force of custom. Hers ought to be the noiseless yet enlarged power of thought, which in the home influence where she is pre-eminent would exert itself to establish the finer and more exquisite principles of morality over those of expediency, pleasure, or worldly wise convenience, establish them upon the basis of reason as well as of feeling; but to do this, she must understand what reason and knowledge are. Imperfectly as Annie might have been educated, still she had conquered something of life's better wisdom for herself, and as the long cherished dreams of her past love re-visited her, faintly, perchance, but truthfully, that wisdom spoke.

"Too well!" she repeated at length, in a low faltering voice, which soon, however, became richer and clearer as each moment flew by, "too well? no, not too well, if that love, strong as it was, has yet sufficient power over you to make you seek what you have hitherto shunned—the ways of truth. Not too well if you will be

that which I once thought you were, and be it ere you again claim my love as yours. At present to become your wife would be dooming both yourself and me to misery ; for I do not honour, nor put faith in you, and my efforts therefore to save you, the efforts of a frail being like yourself, were I presumptuously to unite myself to you with that hope would prove vain ones. If you do love me as you say you do, Lord Ravenshill, now rise above your former self, and be what you can be—the great and the good ; teach my heart again to cling to yours, hopefully, trustingly, and let your name be encircled by the praises of the just, the love of the good—I will not then say I have loved too well.”

“ Annie, my own Annie !” Lord Arthur almost breathlessly exclaimed, while as if scarcely heeding him, as if intent upon pursuing the train of her own reflections, Annie continued to speak.

“ Alike you have neglected the best feelings of your heart, and the talents Heaven has given you—yes, even your

the prize you now strive for, does not, in that glorious future, seem a poor one, then in faith, love, truth, my heart shall cling to yours—be your own.”

And Annie turned towards Lord Arthur to watch the impression her words made upon him. She saw him leaning upon a rugged shelf of the sand, near which they were, his face half covered by his arm—his brow bent downwards—his hand passed heavily upon his closed eyes ; yet she perceived that he was listening—thought that he was wavering, and continued, but in a trembling, more agitated voice,

“ Shall I tell you, Lord Ravenshill, that my own happiness depends upon the success of this fair dream ? shall I ask you to realise it as the brightest hope of my existence—the only hope since I cannot love again—since I have loved but you. Will you not do this ? ” she added, lifting her dark, lustrous, holy eyes to his face with an expression of half anguished entreaty ; “ I will hope—I will pray it may so be—and

you, who profess to love me, will you not listen to my prayer?"

"Listen to it?" repeated Lord Arthur, and as he raised his head, she saw his cheek was tear-stained, and his brow damp, "listen to it?" he repeated, as he glanced towards her, "shall death—evil—anything ever make me turn a deaf ear to it now?"

And a glow of happiness passed over Annie's countenance, as for a time she listened to the reiterated assurances of her lover's faith, and his promised exertions to attain the life pointed out to him; but suddenly that light seemed to fade from her features, and a deadly pallor overspread them. She stepped backwards from Lord Arthur's side; a slight shudder thrilled her frame—a momentary hesitation appeared in her manner, and she again turned towards him; yet stretched forth her hand, and motioned him back, as with an anxious look, occasioned by her singular agitation, he approached her.

"Is there one," she at length said, in a low faltering voice, "Is there one, Lord

Ravenshill, whom—in an earlier time—you deceived for the same purpose as you deceived me? who was good and happy ere you tempted her to evil—who may be even now mourning past hours of innocence? If there is, then wend on your world's-worn way without me—I will not tread on to happiness upon another's shame!"

And as rigid, pale, and motionless, as a chiselled effigy on a tomb, as if she had nerved herself impassably to bear the bitterest trial she could bear, she awaited his answer.

He came up to her; he looked earnestly into her face.

"No, Annie," he said, "there is not. Sins deep, and many, have soiled both my spirit and heart; but never was I tempted to such treachery till I saw you. By the Heaven under which we both stand—by the God, whose presence reigns supreme there, I swear it. Annie, believe me!"

She did believe him; and her perfect and glorious features—for they were glo-

rious in their beauty—became life-like again ; and the minutes fled away, laden with happiness.

Then came the moment of parting ; a light appeared in the parlour window of the house, from which Annie had issued for her stroll on the beach ; and as soon as she saw it, the young lady turned to Lord Arthur, and bade him farewell, saying that her father had returned from his evening walk, and would require her presence. Eagerly his lordship asked her where he should again see her : sadly she looked towards the setting sun—sadly she glanced over the dark blue waters.

“ See me ? ” she said, “ you must not see me again till the dream my happiness is built on is accomplished.”

Lord Arthur started, as he heard her words, and repeated them.

“ No, not again,” she said, “ not till the day comes in which you can claim me as your own. I dare not see you till then—long though the time may be. Do not ask

of self-dependance ; or how could I pay him that loving reverence which a woman, if she truly loves, ever pays her husband ?”

“ Reverence ? to me ?” repeated Lord Arthur, sadly ; “ it is an idle thing to speak of that—ah ! Annie, to my dying day, I must love and reverence you.”

“ Idle,” she answered, “ call you it idle, my lord ? it is on that reverence of love I found my hope of happiness. As you know that I, though faulty and weak, as all human creatures are, yet strive to do well, and for that endeavour revere me, so, for the like efforts, I would revere you. Judge rightly of me, my lord ; I am not one who would take therein of government in my own hands ; I would only teach you to strengthen them in yours—judge wisely of me, and know, I will not be your wife, if, as such, you, in justice, must descend from your superiority to worship mine. No, I would be your wife, to love and honour you ; to follow with the mind as well as with the

heart the exertions of yours, not unwisely to meddle with, or encroach upon the execution of its plans, but to understand the spirit to which mine, through life, as I hope through eternity, will be linked, so that when that spirit tires with its efforts, for a moment, breaks down beneath the burden of its labour, as all human spirits must, I, feeling all it has suffered, and all it has sought, may know how to heal the wounds it has received, with the rich love that true esteem, and glorious admiration give, till it soars once again unhurt in its full strength. Once more then I bid you be yourself, distance my warmest hopes, and bid her, who now reproaches, turn and praise you."

She paused, for a moment, and as she paused, the brilliant beauty of her countenance seemed to fade, and bowing her head in very humbleness before him, in a lower tone, she added—

"Pardon me, if, while thus speaking of you, your mind, measuring mine, tells you

that yours is the superior of the two—I feel it is so ; I know that, at times, exerted to the full, it has distanced in those fitful efforts many and many a brilliant one ; but even as we see specks upon the sun, although we cannot frame a light as glorious, so mine, though the lesser intelligence, knows where yours falls short, and marks the shame of its supineness ; for it is a shame not to exert our better feelings and intellectual powers to their full stretch, and that shame clings to you !”

She staid in her eloquent speech, for a moment, then hastily said —

“ And now let us part, my lord, let us part—though years may pass before we meet again, still my faith will ever be yours.”

“ Years !” said Lord Arthur, mournfully ; “ for how long then must my trial endure ?”

“ Chuse the time yourself,” she answered, sadly, “ judge truly in what period you will be able to make head

against your own waywardness—and judge not hastily.”

His lordship did not immediately speak ; gazing at her with a fixed, earnest look, that soon became intensely sad—

“Annie,” at length, he said, “it is a hard trial ; a thousand things may chance to separate us for ever, even though we may continue to love each other. What would you have me say ? one year ?”

But Annie gave no sign of assent, and Lord Arthur, added—

“Two ?”

And Annie bowed her head.

“Two ?” he repeated ; “Annie, Annie, the time is long—your will is too severe.”

She turned away.

“Nay,” he said, “do not turn from me—I do not shun the trial ; it is the separation, the bitter separation that I fear. May I not see you, once, but once during that long period of probation ?”

But sadly enough she answered—

“No.”

"And where shall I find you when I come to claim you as my own ? here ?"

"No," she replied, fixing her dark eyes inquiringly upon his face, "not here. I will tell you where I am when that time comes."

"Will you not let me know the home of her towards whom all my heart's devotion must ever tend?"

"I may not," answered Annie, hurriedly, "My lord, adieu. Promise me that you will strive to realize the future as my hopes and heart have painted it; promise, oh! promise quickly—for see in the window of yonder house my father's light is placed, and I must now leave you to go to him. Lord Ravenshill, you do not answer—one word before I go!"

And gazing at Lord Arthur, who remained silent and motionless, the fair cheek of Annie grew pale with doubt as she waited for his reply, till suddenly approaching her—

"Annie," he said, in a half choked voice, "if you are true in these promises, these

hopes you have held out to me, once before I go—as my destined wife, clasped to my heart, take the promise you require.”

She raised her eyes to his; she read in them the changed, but now unchangeable character of the love he felt, and the passive hand she had seemed to hold out to him, and which he had merely pressed to his lips, fell powerless by her side, in the next moment Annie was weeping on his shoulder, pressed to his heart; a few minutes after they parted.

To marry a man, to convert him from the errors of his ways is about the idlest thing a woman can do in this world; for unless he gives her proofs before marriage that he has the strength of mind to forsake them, there will be but a poor chance of his doing so afterwards. It is the duty of every woman, if she has married a man whom she thought much better than he really was, to try to win him to better things when she finds out her mistake; but for a young girl to wed with the intent of working out the same purpose is, to say

the least of it, rather presumptuous, and the probability is that she will most certainly fail in her attempt. Annie Cummins was of this opinion ; Annie, when she thought of marriage, hoped to wed a man whom others would respect as well as herself ; a man who would not leave the care of his heart entirely to the soft admonitions of his wife, to which he might listen when in the humour for so doing, and slight when he was not. She wished to wed one whom she could love and honour, and therefore she declared her intention of refusing Lord Arthur till he proved himself to be what she once thought he was. And Annie acted rightly ; for we are under no moral necessity to destroy our own happiness to benefit others, when we feel they will derive no secure advantage from the sacrifice ; and, moreover, we are bound not to peril our own uprightness by giving our hearts and minds into the guidance of those who would, in all probability, lead them astray ; to peril the soul's goodness for the salvation of others is a work of superogation.

CHAPTER X.

My winged hours of bliss have been
Like angels' visits, few and far between.

Pleasures of Hope.

THREE months elapsed after the last interview between Lord Chillingworth and Mr. Winkelmann, and still no kinder understanding took place between Horace and his family. Yet if the natural demonstrations of affection were denied to the deformed by his parents, on the other hand he could not well complain of having an insufficient degree of attention bestowed upon him. Lord Chillingworth indeed

watched his son's demeanour in the rank which he had reassumed with a strong and restless interest that the knowledge of his former station of life was perhaps well calculated to excite in a person of his proud and supercilious temperament. Amongst other disagreeable ideas, prejudice had awakened within him, the one most predominant was that which made him fear he should be ashamed of the mind and accomplishments of his newly found heir, as well as of his person. Knowing as he now knew that Horace had in fact received scarcely any education at all, that in his earlier days he was merely allowed to pick up the knowledge circumstances placed within his reach, he felt convinced of his insufficiency to sustain the honours of Chillingworth with any sort of dignity. In this, however, his lordship, like many other people, who give free scope to their own fears, was utterly mistaken, for Horace was perfectly equal to the new burthen. Simple and straightforward as Horace had been in adversity, so he now

ing and an ease of manner resulting from the strict training of that spirit, which ever leaned upon its own sounded strength, and never suffered itself to be disturbed by the slights or mischances of the world, marked his conversation with a peculiar and original charm, and often and often did Lord Chillingworth wonder when and how Horace had cultivated the mind which shrined in so deformed a case yet claimed so much consideration from strangers as well as friends. Still, however, if his fears as to the abilities of his son were set at rest, he yet contrived to be dissatisfied with him. Ever ready to find fault, he soon construed the quiet ease of his manners into an assumption of independent contempt for the support or countenance of his family in facing the difficulties of his return to his old station of life, and this idea displeased Lord Chillingworth, and thus, although in each succeeding day he was forced to acknowledge he had thoroughly underrated his capacity, he still forebore to soften the harshness of his behaviour to.

wards him. His lordship imagined that he must tacitly acknowledge himself in the wrong, were he to become kind to the son who in past days had so deeply resented his coldness, and therefore, notwithstanding the latent affection he sometimes felt for him, he suffered pride to establish its supremacy where it ought to have been crushed, and forbore to explain, or to relent.

Meanwhile the Marchioness held aloof from Lord Ravenshill with steady perseverance, if not in actual aversion. Her love for her younger son, whom she saw ruined by the acknowledgment of Horace as heir of Chillingworth, and her instantly revived dislike for the latter, influenced her behaviour towards him, which was coldly but exquisitely polite, for her ladyship's wrath though very enduring, was never vehement; it froze rather than burned, and circling the object on which it was exercised with frigid but never-tiring attention, pitilessly planted its iced darts in the very heart of the offender. And it

was thus her dislike evinced itself towards her eldest son ; after her first interview with him not one stormy word or look again disturbed her apparent equanimity of temper. Whenever he addressed her she was as attentively polite as to a newly introduced acquaintance, and as such she paid him a sort of mocking deference, while she distanced the possibility of a complaint by obsequiously complying with all his wishes. To a stranger's eye she would have appeared the most indulgent of mothers ; but she knew within herself that every phrase she uttered was pointed to wound Horace's feelings, whom she was provoked to see bear all he had to bear calmly and patiently. Lady Chillingworth was irritated at this ; she imagined he held her in some contempt since he brooked her coldness so quietly, she would have softened in her manner towards him, had he by word or look betrayed to what extent he really felt her unkindness, for although a spoiled wit and beauty, and a careless mother, her ladyship was not entirely with-

out a heart. Lord Ravenshill, however, did not evince the slightest trace of the pain his mother occasioned him to feel ; to her poignant sarcasms, her exquisitely cold politeness he always replied gently and calmly, for he had accustomed himself to bear much suffering without repining or betraying it, and therefore unable to read his real feelings the Marchioness interpreted the evenness of his demeanour towards her as the result of indifference, rather than of self-control.

With his brother, Lord Ravenshill carried on no sort of intercourse ; Lord Arthur had permanently quitted Chillingworth House soon after the former entered it, and had established himself in town ; they met but of necessity, and gradually they shunned each other completely. Horace would do nothing to make his younger brother believe that he felt for the change of circumstances his sudden return to his family caused him to feel, because, through great pecuniary difficulties then oppressing his father, his allowance was necessarily a


poor one, and even in the future he saw but little chance of doing what his own heart wished might be done, since the property which would devolve by inheritance upon him, was so strictly entailed, or heavily encumbered with debt, that he knew there was no possibility of making a gift or transfer of any part of it. Disinterested therefore, as Horace was, he knew himself obliged to retain every right his elder birth gave him, and for the present was forced to suffer Lord Arthur to weather through life as best he could. Wider and wider in consequence grew the breach between the brothers, for each felt he had earned the other's dislike, and avoided his society as much as possible. Florence and the Dowager, indeed, were the only two in his family who sought Lord Ravenshill's company, or appeared his friends. Isolated then in thought and feeling from his parents and brother Horace vainly sought for happiness in the social circle of his home, and elsewhere, for even his engagement with Frances, whom he constantly

visited, brought a sting with it, since he knew from his keen survey of his father's character, that he would not approve of it. With the consent of Frances, then, to whom he felt himself obliged to explain the difficulties of his position, he yet deferred speaking of it to Lord Chillingworth, and continued to live during some months in a state of suspense. In this disagreeable condition of being, however, notwithstanding the sudden change that had been effected in his prospects, he never lapsed into idleness or sloth. The study of the profession to which he had been brought up, he was in some measure obliged to abandon, in consequence of his new duties as the representative of an ancient family. But though he curtailed the time he had hitherto devoted to it, he yet did not entirely forsake it, since linked as its several branches of knowledge are with many of the clearest truths of philosophy, it seems one of the chief keystones to the other sciences. Gradually he diverged from the close attention he had hitherto given to it,

and suffered his mind to stretch forth its intellectual powers more widely upon different subjects of enquiry, which he had until now partially neglected. Lord Ravenshill felt he was deficient in many things in which his present compeers excelled. Neither Oxford or Cambridge had imbued him with its classical literature, deemed so essential to the high rank in life, now once more his own, and knowing this, he determined still to conquer some part of it to himself. With a mind accustomed to dare all things, to look difficulty steadily in the face, even at a late period in life much may be done. He felt, perhaps, that he should not be able to gain the refined taste which years of youthful and continual study give the mind ; but he knew he might yet acquire some sound knowledge respecting it. Mingling, then, with the new world he was introduced to, though not suffering its business or pleasure to encroach too much upon his time, Lord Ravenshill, whose quiet, calm sense did not like the bustle of public life, abandoned all

thoughts of entering its arena as a diplomatist or senator, and devoted himself wholly to the more silent pursuits of knowledge. Yet amidst the quiet leisure he now devoted to this purpose, he often regretted the arduous life he had left, and the hopes which had then actuated him ; for there is a thousand times more pleasure in rising to the ranks of renown from an obscure condition, than in stepping down to them from a high one.

A heavy burthen, however, notwithstanding all his efforts, at Lord Ravenshill's heart, lay the secret of his engagement with Frances Fielding ; for though feeling himself bound to come to some understanding with her parents, about its continuance, he could not bring himself to mention it to the Marquis for a long period of time. At last, urged by the misery of the suspense in which he lived, after many and many a useless effort, he did so, and, as he had foreseen, completely shattered even the poor opinion his father had, until then, entertained of him. Eager



and strong astonishment were at once vehemently expressed by Lord Chillingworth, as he listened to his son's avowal : The idea of a match with a member of the family which had sheltered Horace in the days of his distress, was peculiarly abhorrent to his feelings, as he knew such a union would perpetuate their remembrance in the minds of other people, and create another nine day's wonder about his own and his son's domestic histories, for the benefit of the gossips, great and small.

It was in vain, therefore, that Lord Ravenshill asked for his consent ; in vain that he declared the circumstances under which the engagement was made, forbade his breaking it ; that his love was no caprice of the moment, but the long-cherished passion of years ; and that his obligations towards the Fieldings' family were such as he could not throw aside. The Marquis was inexorable. Horace's arguments were crushed down like straws before his impassioned will, and his last words as he left

his son's presence, after a sharp altercation with him, expressed his absolute intention of not hearing another word from Horace upon the subject.

Lord Chillingworth said that he knew Horace had the power of wedding whom he chose, that he might go and do so ; but he at the same time declared that it would re-open the closed up breach between them, and that neither he nor the Marchioness would ever countenance Frances Fielding's introduction into the family. Finally, he left him with bitterer expressions of anger on his lips than he had ever before given vent to.

Lord Ravenshill had often feared his father would not readily give his consent to his engagement with Frances ; yet he had also hoped he would not utterly forbid its completion. But now that he knew the worst, and felt the strict determination of Lord Chillingworth would not alter, he still resolved to fulfil it, for he knew a love like hers could not be thrown aside without his incurring a deeper blame than that which

would attach to him were he to disobey his father. His own feelings apart, he considered the matter well, and knowing Frances loved, as truly he loved, feeling that she would feel as he would feel, were the case reversed, his parent's displeasure weighed but lightly in the balance, in a moral point of view, when compared with the unhappiness his desertion would cause her. It is well to enforce filial obedience ; but there are circumstances in which it must not bind people to what is strictly just : there was more evil in Lord Ravenshill's breaking with Frances, after she had blindly given him her love, unknowing he had any parents who could interfere with his actions, than in disregarding Lord Chillingworth's commands, and Horace knew this, and resolved to adhere to his resolution of wedding her. Yet he felt that this union would not be an entirely happy one, for he saw it would estrange him from his family, and burthen him and his wife with many slights and many evils ; but knowing the strength of their mutual affection he felt it

was better that they should bear them together than apart. He never doubted but that Frances would endure them for his sake, strange as it may seem to those who know his diffidence—how could he, indeed, since he saw that every thought of her mind, every feeling of her heart sought reciprocity with his own? It is a love like this which ought to exist between husband and wife ; the love which shrinks back from the revelations the overflowing heart would teach, is imperfect.

On the evening of the same day, Lord Ravenshill met his mother at dinner, and by her conduct, easily saw that the Marquis had communicated the substance of their conference to her, for the singularly polite manner in which she usually addressed him, had increased to a tenfold degree of frigidity. Still, however, she did not utter one word upon the subject which had evidently ruffled her, and he would have been half reconciled to the redoubled coldness of her manner, relieved as he felt him-

self from the dread of her speaking to him of it, had not Lady Florence looked pityingly towards him during the meal, and convinced him that an effectual and perhaps lasting estrangement had taken place between him and his parents.

On that evening, also, Lady Florence, as she rose to retire to rest, in passing by her brother's chair, raised her eyes unquietly and sadly to his countenance, as she said in a low, hurried voice—

“Was not that young girl whom I saw you speaking to the other day, near Apsley House, Frances Fielding?—she, who as a child, led you to Mr. Winkelmann’s?”

Horace glanced up at his sister for a moment in silence, and before he had time to answer, she added, “And that fair-haired gentleman with her—was he her brother—the Henry Fielding you so often speak of?”

Lord Ravenshill again looked up into Lady Florence's face, and perceived that

it was crimsoned with a deep blush, and partly averted from him.

“Yes,” he answered, after an instant’s hesitation, “yes, he was.” And before he could add another word, his sister moved away; but as she retired from the room, he saw her beautiful countenance turned haughtily towards her mother—an expression of mocking scorn sat on it, a strange smile curled round her rich vermillion lips, then suddenly that look faded into one of extreme sadness, and Lady Florence past from the room and from her brother’s sight.

CHAPTER X.

Where shall I look for constant love,
To answer unto mine ?
Others had many kindred hearts,
But I had only thine !

Miss Landon.

Life hath some holier end than happiness !

King Arthur—Bulwer

IN the evening of the day following that upon which Lord Ravenshill had mentioned his engagement to his father, Frances Fielding sat alone with the former in the little drawing-room at Brompton, listening sadly and tearfully to the decision of the Marquis respecting it. From time to time


she looked anxiously up into Horace's face as if seeking to know his own determination regarding herself, and which he had not as yet mentioned. Presently, however, he did so, and a slight glow suffused her delicately tinted cheek ; she glanced still more earnestly at him for a moment or two, then rising from her chair, she stepped some paces nearer to him, and in a quick, agitated tone, said, " You would marry me against your parent's wishes ? Sidney, Horace, is that right ?"

" Even so, Frances," he replied, " you love me ? If our engagement were broken it would cause you deep, deep pain, would it not ?"

" Pain ! pain !" she answered with a half sad smile, " Oh, yes !"

" Then," said Lord Ravenshill, " it is not right that I should break it—come what will ?"

And she listened again for many, many minutes to the arguments Lord Ravenshill used to convince her that she might justly become his wife in opposition to his father's



will ; but she seemed ill at ease as she did so, and her hand oftentimes pressed her brow, as if to bend her scattered thoughts upon the alternative they were considering. And when his last word had died away, bending her eyes with an expression of deep sadness upon the ground, she falteringly said—

“I should enter your family but to be shunned and disliked—I know what your friends even now think of me,—yet I could bear that if I knew it would not be wrong to do this. You, too, will be blamed—will become more and more estranged from your parents—for long, long since, Horace, I have felt they do not love you, as I, as your old friends do. Is it not so ?” she asked, fixing her eyes earnestly upon Lord Ravenshill’s. “I know it is ; they know you not, and they love you not, and I—I, in wedding you, shall bring you but an additional dower of wretchedness. Horace,” she added, in a thick, hurried voice, and after another pause of some length, “one of your own rank may love you as well as

I—not better, but as well—do you think I cannot, will not give up this engagement with you. I can, I will—if its dissolution will pave the way to a father's or a mother's love.”

And Frances was again silent, and though she did not weep, she tremblingly turned away from Lord Ravenshill, who knowing the perfect rectitude of principle that ever governed her mind, and which even now evinced itself in this one strong effort of duty over affection, saw the depth of the sacrifice she at that instant offered to make, yet never doubted the truth of her love, so manifested, as a more jealous lover might have done. But oppressed by the painful thoughts at that moment passing through his mind, and which suggested the fear that she had imagined he wished their intercourse dissolved, it was with a slightly reproachful look, and hasty voice, that he half uttered her name in reply to her last words, then suddenly checking himself as if the spoken sound of the doubt would have offended

her, he remained silent. And Frances seeing his hesitation, and misconstruing it into a dread lest her affection should have failed him, once more turned towards him, and as she felt herself strained to his heart, for one moment she clasped her arms round his neck and passionately wept the while.

“Horace,” she said, “I love you very much ; but I can do this if it will make you happier—only to make you happier, indeed.”

“Happier !” repeated Lord Ravenshill, “can you question the past, or the present, and speak of any happiness for me, unless it is shared with you ? Another would love me did you say ? Who could love me but yourself ? If father, mother, brother have all turned from me in dislike, will not strangers do so too ? And, Frances, if such an impossibility were to happen, do you think that I could love elsewhere ? Years and years ago I loved you, and years and years hence must love you still. Think you that having gained a heart like yours

—under such circumstances—a parent's anger, bitter though it be, could induce me to forsake it. You are my own, Frances, and mine only, and never in life or death will I give you up."

She smiled half tearfully at his words ; she spoke some few words of love in reply ; yet she did not seem reconciled to the idea she shrunk from, she only wept the more, and when he said, "You will be mine, Frances ?" she answered, "Not yet—Oh ! not yet—it will bring evil to you, Horace. You do right in offering to marry me—that I know ; but I should not be doing right, if I were to consent to become your wife. I know it, I feel it, mama will say the same. We will wait," she continued more hurriedly, as she saw Lord Ravenshill about to speak, "we will wait some time yet—perhaps Lord Chillingworth will relent—years perhaps"—

Horace shook his head.

"No ?" she said, more mournfully, "ah ! then what hope have we of happiness, save in the measures you would pursue ? And

still they are not right, they are not right!" Paler and paler did she become—"I give you back all the vows you ever gave me," she added faintly. "Horace, you are free, you have acted justly towards me, now act justly towards your parents and yourself."

But Horace stood for some seconds in speechless bewilderment, he had never dreamed of the possibility of Frances' actually releasing him from his engagement; in her not dissolving it, he rested his only hope of happiness, for he knew that as long as she wished him to fulfil his promise, he was justified even against a father's mandate in not breaking it; now, however, she had given him back his faith—he felt he was free, dreaded being so, and turning towards her,

"Unsay those words," he murmured in a voice choked with emotion, "do not release me—I cannot, I will not be released, what trials can equal mine? Frances, this from you!"

And he leaned down on the arm of the sofa near him, his brain throbbing with the

conflict of painful thoughts within it, his heart beat irregularly. He felt that she was doing right in releasing him as she did, knew that the resolution on her part could be but opposed with bad arguments on his, and felt he dared not make her do wrong. Yet he looked at her reproachfully, and there was an expression of such utter hopelessness and pain in his dark eyes, that in another moment she was at his side, half kneeling down beside him, trembling and weeping and death-like in the deadly paleness which had overspread her fair and gentle countenance.

"I love you, Horace, I love you," she exclaimed, "Oh! do not look so strangely upon me—we should act rightly, should we not? I love you—you do not, cannot doubt me; you know me as well as I know you."

But he did not speak; rapidly through his mind the same feelings were passing as through hers, and she sat down by his side, and spoke again.

"Horace only speak to me! Do you

not think I should feel the separation, too? Better days will come—I will not give up all hope; hope ever lingers with those who act justly—evil can come but of evil—still let us wait. You whom I have loved as so faultless hitherto, will you now swerve from the right? Horace, shall I who love you so dearly, tempt you to a disobedience, which you would regret in after years? No, no, better let this engagement be broken—better even that we should never meet again, than it should so come to pass.”

“Frances,” said Lord Ravenshill, and he raised his eyes to hers with an agonizing look of tenderness, “for heaven’s sake forbear! Never meet again—part, and for ever, did you say? Even yet then you do not know how much I love you, else you could not utter words like those.”

“Not know how deeply you love me?” replied Frances, “oh! I do—I do. Is not your love like mine, which only asks for love in return, and finds its happiness in the affection it seeks?—is it not good and true, such as I have thought mine to be,

free from all selfishness or pride ? It is so, Horace, or I could not love you as I do. "But," she continued, mournfully, "would our love be as pure as it is now, if a father's displeasure rested upon it ? could our union be happy if your heart felt self-condemned in uniting itself to mine ?"

She was silent, and Lord Ravenshill remained so too. With his arm encircling her sylph-like form, he gazed upon that fair, pale face uplifted towards his ; her dark violet eyes were dimmed with gathering tears, and on her countenance there was a holy earnest look of self-devotion, which gave it even a still more beautiful expression than it usually wore. He looked at her for some time in silence ; he thought of her disinterested love—of his own isolation from happiness, till he had known of its existence—into the depths of those calm, sweet eyes he gazed, reading, and feeling all her love for him—imagining its bitter relinquishment—the dreary path of life before him, if unlighted by a hope of a union with her ; and then, as he so thought,

his dark cheek became paler and paler ; his eyes grew dim, a feeling as if the hand of death were freezing the lifeblood in his heart grew upon him ; he rose, and for the moment, the breath of life seemed to have staid in its progress through the parted lips, then his broad chest heaved, as if struggling with repressed emotion, till as though the very effort he used to overcome it was too mighty to endure, he again seated himself upon the chair near him, and a short, low, quick sob, ushered in a wild gush of tears. Covering his face with his hands, Frances yet saw them trickling through the thin dark fingers, which were pressed over the burning eyes, and her own flowing as fast as his, she approached him. It makes a woman's heart sick to see a man weep, and the grief of Frances was increased doublefold at the sight.

"Horace," she said, as if wishing to win one word from him ; but he did not answer.

"Horace," said she, "I would speak—I would say something—I know not what

to say—Horace, dear Horace, speak to me!”

And as he turned his head towards her at the sound of her voice, and she saw the deep, yet restless expression of grief that was flitting across his countenance, she took one of his hands in hers, she pressed it to her heart and lips, and murmured,

“This misery will not endure—it cannot endure for long! Bid me hope, Horace—do you hope—always, always, we must be linked in faith—love, whatever happens—always, till death. I know—I see your love for me will never die, and mine for for you will not! Bid me hope, Horace—I cannot, cannot live without it now, since seeing you so wretched, is double wretchedness to me. I will not live without hope,” she added, half wildly, —“not without hope!”

“No; not without hope,” answered Lord Ravenshill, as he gradually mastered the strong agitation which possessed him, “for then, indeed, all—all would be lost to

me—did I know that you would never be mine, what would life be without you ? It was you, Frances, who taught this heart all the unspeakable bliss it once felt.” He stopped for one moment ; his eye lit upon the exquisitely beautiful girl beside him, and a darker shade of pain past over his pallid features, as he thought of the withering, perchance the death of his life’s dream, and then he added, in a thick, troubled voice,—“ Yet God knows ; if we part now, Frances—and sever the link which, at present, binds us together, we may not again meet as lovers, and beloved, Frances,” he continued, more hurriedly, “ your faith may falter—who could marvel if it did, given as it is to one like me ? You are so marvellously beautiful—created in nature’s fairest mould, and I, I—ah ! did not he, my father, seem to reproach me with it but a short time since ?—my God—my God ! how that one missing gift of thine is felt ! I could believe in her faith—be patient, aye, through years, were I but other in form than I am ; but at

present!—Frances, I have believed—oh ! I do believe in the love which once lighted up my heart with the radiant touch of hope—yet that faith falters for the future. Happiness indefinitely postponed is nigh to none. I shall not be near you, and others more brilliant—more worthy of it than I may win the love which you now bid me relinquish.”

And his voice once more faltered—his eyes sought hers entreatingly. She met that look with a half-sad, half-reproachful glance of love, and only uttered his name softly, yet sadly, as clasping her fair hands together, she leaned them on his shoulder, pressed down her brow upon them, and wept, and in the next moment, the old look of trust and affection dawned radiantly over the countenance of Lord Ravenshill.

“Forgive me, my own—my loved one,” he said, “I will never more doubt, where doubt seems a sacrilege upon the truth of love.” Then the dark shade came back to his pale features, and again, gazing upon her tear-stained countenance, he said,—“Is

this right, Frances ? to sacrifice yours as well as my happiness—every hope of life to a parent's wish ?”

She lifted her large, dove-like eyes, again fast filling with tears, to his face and murmured, almost inaudibly,

“It is right ; it is the only way to win back the esteem of the father you have injured by your boyhood's folly. Horace, a few years' unhappiness may be patiently borne, and perhaps they will in his eyes expiate the errors of your youth.”

“Years !” he repeated, “years to live in morbid, useless misery—and you, too, Frances, since you love as I do, will feel the same.”

“The same !” she answered, with another burst of weeping—“the same !”

Then suddenly dashing away her tears, with a forced smile, she said—

“Horace, in the meantime, you will become happy ; you will earn the love of your family, as you have gained ours—patiently but surely, and—and when the day comes, on which you can claim me as

your own, then I shall see you well beloved by all. Take the prophecy as true, Horace," she added, and brighter smiles glistened through her tears, "'tis as genuine as Cassandra's, believe it as you may."

But Lord Ravenshill did not smile in return; stedfastly gazing at her pale, pure face, he said—

"None will love me but you, Frances, none, none."

"And I must love you ever!"

"Frances, this is not our last meeting."

"We must not often meet again—my heart will break—love is too strong—not often. I cannot see you, day by day, even though it be as a stranger, and not hope for better happiness."

"That happiness will come, at length," murmured Lord Ravenshill.

"At length!" she repeated, mournfully, and her graceful head drooped in half despair, as if her heart were already sickening beneath the pain of separation.

"At length," she added more hopefully, as, with one fond embrace, they parted.

A sense of thorough and sudden despair bore down Lord Ravenshill's spirit, as he passed out from Mr. Fielding's house. He walked home, not without hope, but with so small a share of it, as to drive him to the very verge of despair; for it is a hard thing to lose the one bright hope of existence—the single drop of sweetness that soothed a thousand bitters. And this was nearly the lot of Lord Ravenshill; assured as he was of the love of Frances, he still felt he was about to be separated from her for a long, indefinite period, perhaps, for ever—and it was with bitterness of spirit that his mind dwelt upon future days and future sorrows.

His own heart told him he had borne much; it told him, too, he had yet more to endure, and he felt the same bitter sense of loneliness which had oppressed his earlier years again encircling him—he was alone then, as in former days, save that he

knew one heart, though it could not be indissolubly united to his, beat truly for him—alas ! there was as much anguish as happiness in that last thought.

Days passed ; Lord Ravenshill again saw Frances and Mrs. Fielding. The latter, whose strict sense of rectitude had approved of her daughter's previous resolution, gently though firmly desired Lord Ravenshill to break off the engagement, for the present, and to visit Brompton no more. Her sense of self-respect forbade her to encourage the visits of Horace, since his father openly disapproved of them, and as she readily understood the prejudices of the latter against the match to be really as irradicable as they were, she would not suffer her daughter to continue an intimacy whose issue, in her opinion, could not be a happy one. Gradually, too, she managed to bring over her husband to the same way of thinking. He had, in the first place, strongly wished to protract the acquaintance with Lord Ravenshill, in the hopes of, at last, securing his alliance for his

daughter ; but he was, at length, obliged to give up the thoughts of it, when his wife pointed out the unlikelihood of the Marquis ever giving his assent, and the great detriment a pending engagement would be to Frances, in case another favourable chance should turn up for settling her in life. These were prudential, business-like motives, which Mr. Fielding, being a sharp practitioner himself, at length, consented to listen to, from the lips of his gentle wife. The latter, at times, was obliged to use a good deal of worldly wisdom, to back out her arguments with her husband, for love and duty were but dead letters in Mr. Fielding's well conned alphabet of life, as, indeed, they are in those of many other men's, too."

Gradually, therefore, Lord Ravenshill estranged himself from those who had so long been his dearest friends ; and the time came, when to catch a sight of the pensive but lovely features of Frances in the Park, the street, or elsewhere, seemed to him the only marks by which, as time

fled onward, he severed one long period of hopelessness from another.

Yet neither Lord nor Lady Chillingworth repaid by one word or look of affection the sacrifice he had offered up of his heart's first love, in deference to their wishes.

CHAPTER XI.

The tragedy of real life, unlike that of the stage, is generally a veiled feeling.

Miss Strickland.

“WELL,” said Mr. Winkelmann, as he one day entered Mrs. Fielding’s drawing-room just as she and her daughter were sitting down to tea—a meal at which the little doctor generally dropped in whenever the calls on his professional services, were not very pressing, because he found it more pleasant to have half-a-dozen minutes’ chat with his Brompton friends, than with his medical assistant, or vinegar-tongued house-

keeper—"Well," he said, "ladies, did you see Lady Florence's elopement with her cousin, Maurice Lovaine in this Morning's Post?"

"My dear, dear Harry, I entreat you to mind what you are doing," exclaimed Mrs. Fielding, in a supplicating tone, "you are upsetting the scalding tea you hold all over my hand—Elopement, Mr. Winkelmann, did you say Lady Florence's elopement?"

"Aye, aye, Lady Florence Lovaine's elopement," replied he. "I knew a man once who had some acquaintance with this Maurice Lovaine, and he said he was a likely young fellow enough to get on in the world if he had not had some absurd aristocratic notions which forbade him taking up with any profession. Without a pound in his pocket that he could call his own, except what the Marquis allowed him, he was bred up as a gentleman and an idler—and in due time became a most respectable member of society, as you may imagine."

"But how could the Lady Florence take

a man like him for her husband?" said Frances, "you have often described her ladyship to me as being proud, witty, and upright."

"And, my dear, so she was, and is," answered Mr. Winkelmann; "but Maurice Lovaine had a handsome face, an eloquent tongue, was constantly with her, and thus I suppose she at last fell in love with him *nolens volens*—many a wiser woman has done the same—in fact, all people generally do."

"And where are they gone to now?" asked Mrs. Fielding.

"Why, to the Continent—that refuge for all rascals, pick-pockets, bankrupts, and run-a-ways."

"And is there no chance of Lord Chillingworth overtaking them, and preventing the match?"

"Not the slightest; she eloped from a friend's villa at Richmond about two days ago, and therefore all pursuit must be use-

less, though I believe his Lordship as well as Sid, and his younger brother, went after them."

"Lord Ravenshill?" said Frances.

"Yes, little one, Sid—that is Horace," returned Mr. Winkelmann, and, as his god-daughter suddenly became silent at the mention of her lover's name, he turned to Harry, who was seated near him, and said, as he looked over his shoulder —

"Come, you have not given us your opinion upon this love affair, Harry,—what are you reading so attentively?"

"Reading, sir?" repeated he. "An account of Lord Arthur Lovaine's election for D——, in the D—— Herald."

"Oh! ah! he is elected then?" replied Mr. Winkelmann, "well, I wish his constituents joy of their bargain! A young man, indeed, whose name as yet has never been coupled with any sort of good, to win the day over a quiet, plain-spoken, honest fellow like H——; but it was his father's interest of course that did the business."

"His speech and principles are rather applauded," rejoined Harry, quietly.

"Speeches and principles are like new coin," said Mr. Winkelmann, sharply, "bright enough when first struck off—dirty and defaced enough afterwards."

"There is no arguing with you, sir," rejoined Harry, smiling, "you will have your own way come what may; and yet, as some one ought to stand up for the calumniated, I have half a mind to take Lord Arthur's defence in my own hands."

"Take Lady Chillingworth's too then, and you will finish the business," replied Mr. Winkelmann, "she is not at present very well spoken of with respect to her conduct towards Sid. But now," continued he, with a more serious air, "I have something for Fan's ear alone. Before this family fracas happened at the Chillingworths', Sid came and told me his father wished him to quit England for a year or two—I know not for what reason, except it be that the Marquis wishes to disembarrass

himself of his presence—but, however, he is going, and he begged me, my dear madam, to ask you whether you will allow him to see Fan before he takes leave of us. Now, don't look cross about it, for he must—it is a most reasonable request."

Mrs. Fielding looked dubiously up at Mr. Winkelmann.

"If I permit him to do so," said she, "it will end in a renewal of their intimacy, and that I think for many reasons had better be entirely dropped, therefore—"

"Nay, no therefore, my dear lady," replied the little Doctor, pettishly, "come, come, were you as cruel to yourself in the days of your girlhood, as you would now be to your daughter?"

"I wish I had been," sighed poor Mrs. Fielding within herself, as she thought of her miserable choice of a husband; but she only answered—"I think it will be a most unwise measure to sanction another meeting between Lord Ravenshill and Frances."

"Pooh! not at all," replied Mr. Winkelmann, "not at all, my dear ma'am. If the Fates mean Fan and Sid to come together—which I believe the old witches do—why there's no use trying to circumvent them. So give me your consent at once."

"Frances," said Mrs. Fielding, turning towards her daughter, "what do you think of Lord Ravenshill's request?"

"I should like to see him," murmured Frances, entreatingly.

"Aye, indeed," replied Mr. Winkelmann, shortly, "why, they won't see each other again for two years or more; so no harm can come of this much-wished for meeting. Two years or more! and the engagement has been already dragging on for two!—Pshaw! it is quite a *romance à la Scuderi*! Ah! my good lady, it would have been better to have married them when Sid first found out that little Fan liked him, and then they could have come and have lived with me in the Strand, and have kept my house for me. Sid would

have been a thriving practitioner by this time, and the present awful business would not have happened ; for I don't see what Sid has gained by becoming Earl of Ravenshill except a good deal of trouble. Now, Mrs. Fielding, the matter is settled, eh ! Sid sees Fan if his intention of going abroad still holds good. Fan, my dear, good bye—Harry, if you have a mind to walk to Spring Gardens come with me—Emmy Chownes is at home—I am going to see her father.”

“Much obliged, sir ; but I have too much to arrange for the L—— suit to do myself that pleasure,” returned Harry.

“Humph ! young men are old men now-a-days at a pretty early period in life,” said Mr. Winkelmann, and with a quiet look at Harry, and an old-fashioned bow to Mrs. Fielding he left the room. The intelligence that Mr. Winkelmann communicated to the Fieldings respecting Lady Florence's elopement was perfectly true, as was also the character he gave of the man she had chosen for her husband. Maurice Lovaine

though a spendthrift and an idler had still abilities which could they have been bent upon some definite pursuit might have served him well, and his heart was not so utterly worthless as that of an idler generally is. Brought up, however, under the guardianship of the Marquis, and educated with his cousin, Lord Arthur, in the contemplation of what to his eyes seemed the latter's splendid fortune, he acquired a distaste for any serious occupation, and habits of extravagance ill suited to his slender means. In consequence, he gradually squandered away the small fortune he inherited from his parents, till at the time of his elopement with Lady Florence, whom he really loved, he had little or nothing he could call his own. He hoped, however, that Lord Chillingworth would in some way assist him when his anger at his marriage had passed over, not reflecting that the treachery of his own conduct towards his justly offended uncle in inducing his only daughter to leave his roof in order to effect a clandestine marriage was not

likely to meet with his early forgiveness. Upon no better prospects than these then, Lady Florence consented to become his wife; poor as he was she preferred her brilliant and volatile cousin to the rich but foolish Lord Marchmont, whose suit had been so indefatigably encouraged and severely forced upon her by her mother, on account of his great wealth, and it was after a warm altercation with Lady Chillingworth and herself, respecting the latter gentleman's intentions, that she finally resolved to free herself from further importunity upon the subject by eloping with Maurice.

The fugitives made their arrangements so admirably that all pursuit proved useless, and nothing was heard of them till about a fortnight after the elopement, when a penitent letter arrived from Florence, in which she declared her marriage, and informed them she was in Italy. Yet at the same time with a pride perfectly characteristic of herself and her whole family, she laid some blame upon her mother, for the fault she had committed, alledging that she was

obliged to take the hasty proceedings she had done from a desire of avoiding the otherwise inevitable engagement between herself and Lord Marchmont. Still she entreated her parents' forgiveness, though she said she did not hope for it as yet.

She judged rightly upon that point; the mortification of the Marquis and Marchioness at this foolish step of their beautiful daughter was extreme; their pride being hurt, their cherished schemes of uniting her to the wealthy family of the Marchmonts rendered useless, the receipt of her letter only served to increase their resentment against her and her husband, and a few harsh lines were written in reply to inform the offenders that their family had abandoned and disowned them. Vainly both Lord Ravenshill and Lord Arthur strove to soften the anger of the Marquis, and earnestly entreated him for the sake of their sister to aid Maurice Lovaine judiciously, at a time when united to the woman he loved, there were some hopes of reclaiming him from the dissipated course

of life he had hitherto led ; but Lord and Lady Chillingworth were inexorable, and would not listen to any excuse for the conduct of their nephew and daughter. Even the dying voice of the Dowager whose health had been gradually giving way ever since Horace's re-entrance into his family, was disregarded by them, and as she lay upon what she felt was her death-bed, her prayers for the forgiveness of the grandchild, whose wayward character she well knew would scarcely be softened by a too strict severity, were inflexibly denied.

They heard no more of the Lady Florence ; even her brothers, after a few months had elapsed, failed to trace her rapid movements on the Continent, where she and her husband continued to reside. Report spoke of her as at various places living happily, dressing gaily ; but they doubted as to her happiness and her wealth ; for they knew Maurice's resources were slender, and felt that a heavy weight of care must be already gathering round

her. Both Lord Ravenshill and his brother had each but a limited allowance, their father being in embarrassed circumstances, and therefore they had little money to spare, yet that little they would have freely given had they thought it sufficient to reclaim Maurice from his still idle style of living ; but they knew it was not, and they waited to offer it to their sister when a real time of need came.

The fault of Lady Florence was great ; the reproach she threw back upon her parents inexcusable ; yet, to cast her off from all succour for an act that their own stern will had partly driven her to, was about as erring an act as hers, since they, who have neglected to curb or guide a high spirit in its earlier exertions, may, naturally, expect to see it recoil, in after times, in direct hostility, upon themselves.

Full nine months after the elopement of Lady Florence had caused the considerable sensation it did in the fashionable circles in town—while the sun was sinking behind the smiling woodlands of Chillingworth

sake—she will not refuse to do so ; for a pure gift from the hands of the dying must, indeed, be blessed.”

And once more the Dowager sank back upon the couch and was silent—nor did she again speak ; she only answered her grandson’s thanks for this unexpected token of her kindness by a faint smile ; and a few hours afterwards, surrounded by her family, with that same smile upon her face, she died.

And when Lord Ravenshill, months and months after his grandmother’s death, parted from Frances with renewed professions of affection ; that jewel so kindly sent to the latter, was, by her, accepted and cherished as the next precious gift to those of Horace himself.

With promises of faith in each other’s affection, of constancy, the lovers parted—for they thought no trial could chill their mutual love. Alas ! the young too rashly deem themselves able to conquer a happy future for themselves ; in the bosom of the unscanned future, there are trials awaiting

each individual, that bear hardly, yet fittingly, upon the framework of his heart and mind, not his subtlest or broadest thoughts, his faintest or strongest feelings escape their destined contact ; but drawn to the touchstone of examination their strength is probed—their weakness shown. Unwavering faith, unfaltering love, have never yet dwelt on earth, nor ever will dwell, even in the hearts of the best and the purest ; and good and true as was the mutual affection of Lord Ravenshill and Frances, they who know what man's heart really is, would not have dared to pronounce it incapable of being shaken, for the stamp of imperfection lingers upon every human feeling still.

CHAPTER XII.

—To be,
Thine ever more ! youth mingled with thy youth,
Age with thy age—in the grave thine—above,
Spirit beside thy spirit—this is love.

King Arthur. Bulwer.

Self love, my lord, is not so vile a sin
As self neglecting.

Henry V.

It is not by the trivial efforts of a fitful zeal
that a man will attain the distinctions which
minds of a higher order than the common
generally aim at ; no one can be successful in

Lovaine's, brilliant as well in its eccentricity of genius, as in its strength of purpose when thoroughly roused into action ; but its rare excellence was marred by a want of perseverance. Quick in its perceptions, it very rarely had sufficient patience thoroughly to examine a subject under discussion, but leaped hastily to conclusions, and built showy hypotheses upon no solid foundation. Often deceived, however, as he had been in his judgment, Lord Arthur knew his fault ; and now, for the first time, tried to rectify it. Six months back he had taken his seat in the House of Commons as member for D—— ; but with a modesty which, to his friends, seemed a peculiarly new phase in his character, though constantly in attendance there, he spoke very little, and listened attentively to the debates without an attempt to display that brilliant eloquence which they knew full well he possessed. The truth was, Lord Arthur felt thoroughly dissatisfied with himself after he began to discover that, dazzling as his talents might

words had fully mastered the subject they expressed, while the keener witted, half guessed the bent and purpose of his mind, and saw it was judiciously measuring the wisdom around it ere it fully displayed its own, which as yet, untamed by experience, was rude and imperfect. A change, indeed, for the better had been wrought in Lord Arthur's character, that was as visible to his gay friends as to his more worthy ones, and this change they attributed to the late alteration in his circumstances. Certainly it is a good thing for the young to be thrown in some degree upon their own resources, in order to win whatever bournes they aim at ; but the struggle to attain them, if suddenly entered upon, sharply evinces itself in their outward bearing ; since when the mind is newly engaged on some great end, it is unequal in its efforts, and bears but ungracious fruit, till the rust of the weapons it has for a long time suffered to lay by is cast off, and it can readily employ them to its purpose. A quick commencement of the mind's struggle

over its previous habits of self-indulgence, is the greatest test of its real strength ; few persons can instantly throw them off, though all may gradually be brought to do so.

Unequal, absent and irritable then at first, did the conduct of Lord Arthur appear to his family and friends, while undermining the work of the past, and tracing out plans for future years. His Lordship had schemes of power and preferment—wild ones it may be—Ambition's first reveries are generally wild enough ; yet though those first dreams are never altogether realized, still they are useful in bearing the mind on to perhaps stranger realities. Each man who has chanced to be great has he not had them ? They are the foreshadowings of better things, and if some, in after years, find that they have faded away, and left no enduring fruits, it is because their first inspirations have not been wisely or uprightly acted upon ; the chaff has not been separated from the wheat, and the latter has been thrown

away with its worthless adherent. Man may do much, and work much upon the priceless thoughts which sometimes visit his mind ; but then they must be forced into more practical being by the undeviating will directing them to a purposed end, else like seeds brought by a viewless wind, to a desert soil, they may carelessly decay, and the germ of future life within them remain for ever undeveloped. To store the mind with youth's bright imaginings, to form them into some definite shape which, as manhood advances upon it, may become sobered with its sagacity, is no idle task, since their warmth of life quickens the will into action : they are useful so that they are secret, so that their beginnings are only seen, and the end of their purpose never guessed at. To show the shrine to which your heart is tending, while as yet at a considerable distance from it, will earn you but the fool's laughter, and the wise man's scorn ; the first footsteps of the ladder of Fame should be trodden silently, so that rivals may not fear you, or friends in their misplaced

affection do you damage. It is time enough when you know your own strength to speak loftily, and a beginner never knows it.

Lord Arthur was essaying his ; something of the quiet yet profound sense of his elder brother seemed to possess him at this period of his life, and much as his friends wondered at the alteration in his conduct, neither their remonstrances nor ridicule could make him swerve from the resolutions he had adopted. A great many people take a delight in rendering others as idle and as worthless as themselves, and such friends were not wanting in the attempt to draw Lord Arthur back into his old habits ; but luckily from him, he was that sort of man whom a laugh or a sneer rather hardened to maintain than abandon his own opinion, and therefore their efforts only confirmed him in his new course of life. Some few persons there are of Lord Arthur's turn of mind ; right good spirits are they to battle through the world, though sometimes, if over sensitive, rather unpleasant ones to deal with.

The session was over, the hunting season already nearly past, and Lord Arthur comfortably domiciled in a bachelor friend's house in Somersetshire. The gentleman, whom he thus visited, was a neck-or-nothing sportsman, and, his residence being filled with friends of the like tastes, his Lordship was consequently dragged to every meet within twenty miles of the place. He liked the excitement of the sport at first, because he was a daring rider ; but at length he found it wearisome, and left off invariably accompanying his friend as the latter wished him to do. However, when he absented himself in this manner from following the hounds, he generally contrived to have a recreation in a style peculiarly his own, but which did not meet with the approbation of his sporting friends, and this was a long gallop over the surrounding country by moonlight, through the picturesque passage of the Chedder cliffs, or towards the broad sea where it stretches itself round the sands of Weston. There he would draw rein,

and remain motionless on his steed, gazing out upon the wide ocean whose broad billows were girt in the distance by the outlines of the Welsh coast, till perhaps a gathering storm, or the waning night sent him back on the full gallop towards the house of his friend. Often and often did the rattling clatter of his horse's hoofs rouse the poor villagers from their sleep at a most unseemly hour of the night, and many who chanced to meet him in his wild race homewards, and scarcely staid to examine his features, imagined it was the very Prince of Darkness himself who thus unceremoniously disturbed their rest. But rarely did he meet many people in these nocturnal rides, for he generally contrived to pass through the most solitary parts of the country, as if the rencontre of strangers was as disagreeable to him as to them.

One evening, however, when the sky was heavily obscured with clouds, he was destined to play a part in an adventure of rather a singular character. In hurrying home, as he was passing over a meadow,

which a thick hedge separated from a narrow lane, through the branches of the bushes formed into that defence he saw a most mysterious light, in the distance, advancing up its centre, and upon quickening his horse's pace he soon discerned a Guy Fawkes-like group of muffled figures following a taller one which carried a dark lantern that was every now and then turned towards the party behind, so as to enable them to see the puddles the heavy rain had formed in the road. Stifled laughter, a little musical shriek, and several hesitating stops in the onward progress of the group made him believe there were two or three young girls midst the persons before him, and as the wind blew directly in his face, and brought fragments of their conversation to his ear he was soon perfectly convinced of this—

“How very silly,” said the fresh tones of a young girl's voice. “How very silly it is of mama not to keep some sort of a conveyance to take us to these stupid little

dancing parties—we shall all catch cold—I see already that you are wet through and through.”

“Scarcely so yet, Sophy,” returned another voice, in quiet gentle accents, which accents, however, made Lord Arthur start with sudden surprise, for he almost felt sure they were Annie’s, “I have a thick shawl on.”

His Lordship listened more attentively, and made his horse step nearer to the advancing group, that he now saw consisted of two young girls well muffled up, a footman, and a young boy.

“Fan has stepped into a puddle,” suddenly screamed the last named little individual with a shriek of laughter, “stepped into a puddle.”

“On! hush! hush! don’t, Ally,” exclaimed the young girl, addressed as Sophy, in a frightened tone, “you will certainly bring some poachers and mischievous people about us, if you talk so loud. I am almost sure I saw two men behind the tree yonder

even now—you know some of the labourers hereabouts are discontented.”

“Quite right, miss,” exclaimed a thick, coarse voice, close to her elbow, we are discontented, and we’ve enough to make us so in these hard times—come give something to get two poor fellows a bit of bread will you?”

And two thick-set powerful men placed themselves full in the light of the lantern, and become distinctly visible to the whole party, as well as to their unseen observer Lord Arthur, who at the very moment rode up to a spot parallel to that on which the frightened group stood, called out in a threatening tone to the men, and attempted to make his horse leap the bridge. But this feat, the animal, with an obstinacy which sometimes possesses horses as well as their masters, refused to do, and his Lordship not wishing to waste time in the conflict between the beast and himself, dismounted and tried to climb over the hedge, The robbers looked up with some

eagerness to see whether he was accompanied by a friend, and after satisfying themselves that he was not, seemed at a glance to take in the chances of his success and measure the length of time in which he was likely to accomplish the task he had commenced, then coolly and audaciously they reiterated their demands upon the ladies' purses. They saw that the footman who marshalled the party was old and infirm, and moreover too frightened to offer any opposition to their will, that the child could offer no resistance ; they knew the very worst they could encounter would be a struggle with Lord Arthur ; and therefore they answered the young girl's protestations of their having no money, by a surly request for their jewels.

It was at this moment that his Lordship reached their side, and to the extreme terror of the ladies was in the very next instant laid prostrate at their feet by a ready blow from a heavy bludgeon which one of the men carried in his hand.

Then, with a threat, they once more

turned towards the ladies, and again asked them for their trinkets, As eagerly and quickly as their terrors would permit they both began to divest themselves of all their jewels, and meanwhile earnestly prayed the men to leave them.

"Leave us, cousin Fan?" said the boy in a low half whisper to the lady nearest to him, and yet which could be distinctly heard by the men, "Leave us, did you say? No, no, keep them here. Squire Dickon and his man will pass by in ten minutes or so, and then we can catch them. Keep clasping and unclasping that bracelet of yours—don't give it to them yet awhile—he was to follow us, you know."

"You little devil!" exclaimed one of the fellows who overheard the boy's whisper, "come give us the bracelet at once, my fine lady, or you may repent it."

And rudely seizing the arm of the young girl, he addressed, he tore off the jewel that encircled it, listened for a moment to the sound of some wheels in

the distance, and then with a significant glance at his comrade, dashed out the light of the lantern, and ran hastily off.

With breathless attention the party thus left in utter darkness by the wayside, listened to the receding footsteps of the robbers, and full five minutes elapsed before any of them spoke or stirred ; but at length a low chuckling laugh issued from the lips of the young boy, and turning round he said,—

“ Did’nt I do him nicely, Fan ? did’nt I send them off fast enough, Sophy ? Squire Dickon, indeed ! Squire Dickon is supping comfortably by his own fireside, I dare say. Soph, laugh, do laugh—never mind the loss of your bracelets.”

“ Laugh !” echoed his sister in terror-stricken accents, “ laugh, Alfred, with that poor gentleman, who came to help us, now lying dead in the middle of the road ! Oh ! what shall we do ?”

“ Oh ! ah ! the gentleman !” echoed the boy, sorrowfully, “ but Soph, he is not dead

—he can't be dead—they only gave him a blow with a stick or a club, and that often stuns without killing.”

“But what are we to do with him, Alfred? we cannot leave him here all alone, till we send proper people to fetch him—we cannot stay here ourselves, for more wicked people may come—what shall we do?”

“I will tell you, Sophy,” said the now tremulous voice of her cousin, “I have been thinking what best could be done all this while. You, Alfred, and Merrick had better go on to Dartmoor Lodge, which as well as being the nearest place to us, is this gentleman's home, and I, meanwhile, will stay here with him.”

“What you! all alone too, my dear, dear Fan? No, no, you must not,” exclaimed Sophy, “those horrid men will return, and that is dreadful to think of! Besides, it is quite dark along the road since they put out the light, and none of us can see our way to the Lodge, I am sure—is there no remedy but that?”

"No," replied her companion, hurriedly, "Go, directly, then for help, every moment you lose may endanger this gentleman's life."

"But other men may meet us—I am frightened to death," urged Sophy.

"Two adventures like the present are not likely to occur on the same night," returned her cousin, "neither will the robbers return here since they cannot imagine any of us intended to remain in this place when once at liberty to depart—moreover Alfred wisely frightened them away with a threat of Squire Dickon's appearance. Go, Sophy, or I will go by myself and leave you and Merrick here."

"But the darkness, the darkness," again urged Sophy.

"Will soon be past," replied her cousin, "do you not see that broad light struggling through yonder cloud? it is the light of the moon. The rain has ceased; walk straight on then to the end of the lane, and the moonbeams will soon show you the path. Go, Alfred, make her go—

Merrick knows the way to the lodge." And for a moment as the pale light she alluded to, struggled through a broken cloud they saw her countenance was pale, and her cheeks tear-stained.

"You are frightened, cousin Fan," said the boy. "I will remain with you."

"No, no," continued she, more vehemently ; then in a lower tone added as she drew the child apart from the others. "If Sophy and Merrick feel frightened they will turn back and do a thousand foolish things, unless you accompany them, Alfred ; and that is why I do not wish you to stay with me. Lead them to the lodge—I trust to you."

The boy understood her, felt gratified at the compliment she paid to his good sense, and uniting his persuasions to hers, at length made his sister and Merrick move on towards the lodge.

Young and fair, and delicately clothed was the girl whom her companions had left to watch by the senseless form of Lord Arthur Lovaine. Seen by the flickering

light of the moon as it transiently pierced the dark vapours of a stormy sky, her features could be traced as almost faultlessly beautiful in their outlines, and her dress, though partially covered with a large shawl, was evidently from the glossy richness of its surface made of costly materials. In the half darkness around her, as the footsteps of her young friends died away in the distance, she bent down in some terror to gaze upon the features of Lord Arthur ; laying a trembling hand on his pale forehead, she pushed back the thick curls of brown hair which clustered there, knelt down, and listened for the breath that her fears told her, had perhaps passed away for ever from the lips over which her hand was held. She listened long ; listened till the beating of her own heart was the only sound she heard in the stillness around her ; she sat down on the roadside, lifted Lord Arthur's head upon her arm, and then for the first time saw that a stream of blood was issuing from the temples, and though partly concealed by

his long, thick hair, was welling down over her clothes and his. But the sight of this spectacle did not urge the young girl to tears ; a stronger expression of grief, indeed, seemed to grow upon her countenance, a quicker expression of restless impatience, and turning her head in the direction of the path her friends had taken, in painful suspense she seemed to count each second that flew by, and brought no notice of their return. Now and then she heard a solitary footstep in the distance, the trickling splash of the rain, too, which had again begun to fall, on the already flooded roads, but not the aid she wished for. She felt the cold night air pierce through the thick outer covering she wore, and dreading its effects upon the senseless man before her, woman-like, she unwrapped it from around herself, and folding it over him endeavoured to shield him from its keenness. The heavy rain increased, the autumn blast grew colder, and the delicate frame of the girl, clothed as it was in a thin evening dress, seemed to shiver like a reed as it rushed by her,

and then pursued its onward course over hill and dale, yet she did not appear to heed the rain or wind, but only wound her shawl closer around Lord Arthur, and glanced eagerly in the distance for the help she felt was so long coming. For one moment too on the damp brow, closed eyes, and pallid lips, she laid her hand, and pressed her lips, as she thus watched and waited.

At length in the far distance she saw the glare of torches, and heard the tramp of feet, and presently about a dozen persons came up the lane, and hastily approached her. They proved to be the wished-for succour, and rising as they drew nearer, she beckoned them to the spot where she stood. Lifting Lord Arthur in their arms they soon placed him in a kind of litter which they had brought with them, while some curiously looked towards the lady who had so courageously volunteered to watch over his safety. Roused by their scrutinizing glances to a sense of the singular appearance her rich evening

costume gave to a pedestrian in a lone, country road, on a stormy night, the young girl gathered a dark, silk bonnet that had partly fallen off, more closely over her jet black tresses which, wet with the rain, and wreathed with white flowers, hung in dark, damp masses over a neck as white as alabaster, then whispered some words to Merrick, whom she saw amongst the crowd. In obedience to her commands he took some cloaks the men had brought as a security against the rain, threw them over his lordship, and returned her the shawl. She hastily put it on, and at that moment a gentleman of the party came up to her, and expressed his thanks for her kindness towards his old friend Lord Arthur.

“It is Miss Fielding, I believe?” he continued, “Miss Fielding, whom I had the pleasure to speak to the other day at Mrs. Baxter’s.”

The young lady bowed acquiescence, and the gentleman added,

“Permit me to say that your cousin is at the lodge waiting your arrival, for she will

not proceed home without you. If you will accompany us thither, I can afford you every accommodation for returning to your house."

And Miss Fielding accepted his offers of assistance, and, accompanied by her manservant, followed the cortége home. The moon shone with clear lustre in the heavens, and bathed hill and valley in a flood of light, as that train wound slowly towards Dartmoor Lodge. Afar in the distance, lay its park and thickly wooded pleasure grounds, through which echoed the rush of the rising wind—the fall of the autumn leaves—and the plaintive note of birds awakened in their trembling roosts by some crackling branch, and hurrying away to securer resting places. Onward and onward went the steady tramp of the men, who carried the litter, the pale moonlight streaming down upon the pale features of Lord Arthur, and making them look still more death-like than they really were, till, as they passed through some dark groves of trees in their hasty traverse across the

park, their leafy arches here shut out the silver moonbeams, and the red glare of the torches resumed its power, and flickered over them with a shadowy hue of life. At last, the whole party stepped within the precincts of the lodge, and soon after entered the building itself. It was with a long lingering look of intense grief that Miss Fielding glanced after Lord Arthur, as she entered the apartment where she was told her cousins waited for her, and saw him borne from her sight. Impatiently, for a few minutes, she paced up and down the room, unheeding the surprised looks of her companions, till they asked her whether it was not time to go home ?

“ Home ? ” she repeated after them, and as she turned her pale face in their direction, both the boy and his sister, when they saw the strong emotion depicted there, blamed themselves for having left her alone on the roadside, and imagined she had been too much frightened during her long watch to be perfectly herself at the present

moment ; “ Home ? ” she repeated, “ yes—but Sophy, we cannot possibly leave the house till we know what injury Lord Arthur—this gentleman—has received.”

“ Fan says true,” said the boy, turning to his sister, “ it would be a horrid shame for us to go till we know how he is, since he got into this scrape for our sakes.”

And seeing the gentleman, who had invited Miss Fielding to her present shelter, passing through the hall, into which their apartment opened, he ran out to try to ascertain how Lord Arthur was.

The person he addressed proved to be the master of the house, and he gave but an unsatisfactory answer to the boy’s eager enquiries, then followed him into the room where the ladies were, and asked them to name what accommodation he should offer them to return home.

“ Oh ! any sort of escort,” replied the young girl called Sophy, “ our house is but ten minutes’ distance from this place. We had better walk home, Fan, had we not ? for our clothes are wet through and

through, and there is no sense in sitting still, even in the most comfortable vehicle with them hanging in this manner about us."

Miss Fielding merely nodded her acquiescence in her cousin's suggestions; then turned round, and, once more, almost breathlessly asked after Lord Arthur. The question was again unsatisfactorily answered; the injuries his lordship had received were declared considerable; but not one word did Miss Fielding utter in reply, when her companions expressed their grief at the intelligence. Almost mechanically she suffered herself to be led from the room, and had left the house before she found herself able to utter a single syllable. Both the cousins seemed to fancy she was ill, and attended by the promised escort, they hurried her home.

It was about three weeks after this unfortunate occurrence, that Lord Arthur, perfectly recovered from the injuries he had received, entered the porch of a pretty little cottage *ornée*, situated at the furthest

and most secluded end of Dartmoor Park. A rugged road led up to, and abruptly terminated at the clean white palings that enclosed its little garden, which, as well as the building, was of small dimensions, and seemed to argue no great wealth on the part of its proprietors. A young lady clad in a pretty silk dinner dress was seated on an old garden chair beneath the porch, with some sketching materials before her, and towards her his lordship hastily advanced.

“I have enquired all about you, Annie,” said he, as he approached her—and these were the first words he uttered—“I have watched and waited till I was convinced I should see you alone, and, at last, I have succeeded in my endeavours. My present visit cannot be deemed an infringement of the compact we entered into when we last met, since your and your cousin’s anxious enquiries at the lodge, during my illness, seemed to warrant this intrusion—therefore I came.”

“To receive my best thanks for your

assistance the other night—my warmest congratulations on your recovery,” said the young girl, rising from her seat with a deep blush. “I wished to see you, my lord—I hoped for this satisfaction—surely no—our compact is not broken by this visit.”

Lord Arthur glanced up at her, as he said—

“And I have also to thank you for your kindness in remaining with me on that eventful night. The men seemed reckless villains from what I hear, for all search after them has proved fruitless—not many would have done so.”

“Many would,” rejoined Annie; “how could they have done otherwise, when you were helpless and suffering?”

“Annie,” rejoined his lordship, after a moment’s pause, “you look pale and thin—you have been ill.”

She raised her large, dark eyes to his face, with a smile—

“No,” she replied, “not ill—save that

my heart was ill at ease when you were so."

She bowed her head, and the tears coursed slowly down her cheeks.

"Did you think of me when you were so dangerously ill?" she said. "I thought of you—my life was then one long thought of you."

"Are you not my heart's life-dream?" he answered; "the near approach of death cannot weaken an influence exerted as yours has been."

They were silent, for some minutes, and then, he said—

"There is a mystery about you that I cannot fathom, Annie."

"There is," she quietly answered, glancing up into his face, "nor must you seek to know it yet."

"You do not belong to the class of persons of which you represent yourself a member," resumed Lord Arthur; "you are in affluence; you have a higher rank than you appear to have."

"True," she answered, calmly; "I never

told you I was poor ; it was you who interpreted things according to their seeming, and I, moreover, was bound by a secret engagement not to undeceive you in that respect. Yet neither my father nor I misled you purposely, neither of us feigned a simplicity of manner or want of education not natural to us."

"But Mrs. Henrichs," said Lord Arthur, his ideas reverting to her singular old relative at D——.

"She is my own aunt," answered Annie, "I am residing with her and my cousins even now."

"And your father?"

"Was a tradesman. We told you no untruths, my lord, and acted none."

"But your name is Fielding, and not Cummins?" again resumed his lordship.

"I cannot answer any further questioning on that subject," she replied.

"Annie," said Lord Arthur, once again, "is it right thus to deceive me as to your real station in life, bound as I am to you by irrevocable vows of affection."

“Put as much faith in me, my lord, as I do in you, and suffer me to leave your present enquiries unanswered,” she replied, fixing her dark eyes penetratingly upon his face. “I have fettered myself with a long engagement in the belief of one day receiving your love as I hope to receive it, although past circumstances might have made me dread your instability of character ; in return, I only ask you to let me appear to such as I now appear. By acquiescing in this request of mine, you will only give me a proof of your affection that will bind me more strongly to you, and which you cannot well refuse, when I tell you, that whatever my real rank in life is, it is not *beneath* the one in which you supposed me to move.”

“No,” returned Lord Arthur, half-aloud, as he glanced at her again, “no, these trinkets—this dress—your manner—your education—”

“May, nevertheless, belong to one of the middle class, my lord—to the daughter of some well to-do tradesman in the city ?

Just so—that is the station in life which I wish you to believe is mine,” provokingly replied Annie, with a smile. “I have taken much upon trust from you—take thus much from me.”

“I will, Annie,” answered Lord Arthur, more calmly after a moment’s consideration; and he drew a plain cameo ring from her finger, “and in token I will keep this.”

“Be it so,” said Annie, with a smile; “take it as a parting gift—you will not see me after to-day.”

Not a word came from his lordship in reply.

“Not after to-day,” continued she, rather sadly. “I leave for town to-morrow; but I shall often be near you.”

“Near me?—in town?” repeated Lord Arthur, half starting, from a reverie.

“Often and often,” said Annie. “I have been near you much of late, and shall be so yet.”

“Is it so?” rejoined he, after a moment’s pause; then he earnestly added, “do you

know what the hopes you gave me, some time since, have wrought in me?"

"A change—a beneficial change of thought and feeling?" she answered eagerly, "Oh, yes!"

"And the love I bear you, Annie," he continued, "do you not feel it must grow stronger and stronger, the more my mind masters through hope of its reward?"

Her eyes dwelt on his for a moment with an earnest, thoughtful look ; she paused in a hesitating manner during a second or two, and then said,

"If, when the goal you now strive for seems nearly won, the love of her on whom your affections are placed—whose words first urged you to the line of conduct you now pursue, if her love could not be yours—were proved faithless, what would you do?"

Lord Arthur glanced towards her in wonder, and his cheek became slightly paler ; as he listened to her a look of doubt passed over his features ; and, as if struck

speechless, with sudden fear he uttered not a word.

"What would you do?" continued Annie; and she fixed her large, dark eyes on his face; "would the spirit which, until then, could strive to perform its duty, tire in its exertions, when that which it idly esteemed its best reward was lost?—or would it labour still onward in the better course, and shun the quicksands of despair—even though it were my own faithlessness that tempted it towards them?"

And still with her calm eyes bent on his she waited his reply.

"You—you prove faithless?" uttered Lord Arthur, almost inaudibly, and he glanced eagerly towards her, as if to read a refutation of his fears in the serene repose of her countenance, "you cannot—you will not?"

"But if I did?" said Annie, in the same low, clear tones.

"If you did," repeated he, in a quick, hollow voice, and his eye-lids closed over

the eyes as if to shut out some vision of misery that his fancy conjured up ; “ if you did, all faith in human kind would be wrecked—my heart tenantless—life joyless—death welcome—and the future—”

“ The future ?” echoed Annie.

“ Though its dreams—the dreams which you first taught me to realize might be worked out, the labour of so doing would be a burthen—their accomplishment a duty.”

“ But still,” repeated Annie, “ still they would be realized ?”

And the light seemed to gather with greater strength in the large, bright eyes of the young girl, as Lord Arthur bent his almost sternly upon her, and answered,

“ Aye, they would be realized ! Truth remains truth, though, at times, it may be taught by corrupted lips ; life has but one true end in view, and though that end may chance to be pointed out to us by the traitor or the hypocrite, still it must not be for-

saken, though we may know the teacher's worthlessness. And if you—even you, Annie, were to break your faith with me at this moment, still the lessons you have taught me, would not be cast aside; Annie," he continued, in a low, thick voice, "they have garnered my soul with new life; they will remain with me till death—and for awhile—on this earth, I would sooner part from you, than lose the strength to realize the hopes I now possess."

"Realize what?" returned Annie, calmly, "the hopes of ambition, wealth, or power?"

"No; those of the spirit's mastery over its evil principles; those of attaining the use of this world's wisdom for the purposes of the next."

Annie buried her face for some minutes in her hands, as she leaned forward on the rustic chair on which he sat, then looked towards Lord Arthur, her fair face streaming with tears, yet with a bright smile in her dark eye.

"Ah!" she said, in the low-voiced tones of breathless thankfulness; "you have made me happy beyond my wildest imaginings—but never doubt my love."

"Never," returned Lord Arthur, as he glanced at her speaking countenance; and the dark dream of the past moment fled from his soul; "we are bound together by affection strong as death."

And an hour afterwards, when he parted from her, still in utter ignorance of her real name and rank, the same words were re-echoed from his lips.

END OF VOL. II.



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and dates.



